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INSIDE SPORTS

VOLUME FOUR

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COMEBACKS

I just got through reading Al McGuire's article ["The Top 20," December] and I thoroughly enjoyed it. There's only one thing that bugs me: Why does everybody overlook the Big Eight Conference? Let's take a look at the top teams:

Missouri: (No. 12 on McGuire's list) Without a doubt it's the best team in the conference. How could a team with Stipanovich, Frazier and Sundvold not be rated in the Top 10?

Kansas State: I can't believe a Jack Hartman team "filling out the field." They have four starters returning. They are No. 12 in my book!

Oklahoma State: Another team overlooked. Matt Clark and four other starters return.

Mr. McGuire, wait 'til the finals. There might be two Big Eight teams there!

JERRY E. STITH
Kaiser, Missouri

I might eat my words for this, but your so-called expert on college basketball (Al McGuire) is a fluke. I respect him for being a good coach and commentator, but his predictions? For example, I wouldn't pick Wake Forest No. 14 (how about No. 26?). And Georgetown No. 8 (more like No. 30)? And the shocker of the year, Wichita State to finish No. 5? Please, don't make me laugh!

MICHAEL S. RITZ (age 13)
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The photographs of "That Championship Season" [December] were superb. Please try a photo essay of one event in the future. Such a sequence can give one an intriguing experience.

CHARLES SLADE
Vancouver, British Columbia

In reply to John Feinstein's article about Mike Krzyzewski, "The Ones That Got Away" [December], last year I was an assistant coach at Maryland, and we were recruiting a player named Uwe Blab. Duke was also recruiting him. In the article, Mike said he felt I had bad-mouthed his players in the recruiting of Uwe. Mike should check his information. I was not the

assistant who was involved in the recruiting of Blab. I never saw him play or talked to him on the phone. Mike should check into things before putting his foot in his mouth. I wish him all the success in the world.

TOM ABATEMARCO
*Assistant Basketball Coach
Virginia Tech University*

Regarding Pete Axthelm's attribution of the "on any given Sunday" maxim to former NFL Commissioner Bert Bell, memory and author Gerald Eskenazi say it ain't so.

Family lore credits my father, Jack Lavelle, with adding that pearl of sports wisdom to the vocabulary. So does Eskenazi, in his book *There Were Giants in Those Days*. You could look it up, as Casey Stengel used to say. Or was that Ring Lardner?

Lavelle was chief scout for the Giants in the glory years of Conerly, Gifford and Webster, as well as scout for Notre Dame, Yale and Army.

So, "Axthelm's Axiom" is not son of "Pete's Parity" out of "Bert's Balance." Might it be called "Lavelle's Law"?

JACK LAVELLE
Phoenix, Arizona

I am a faithful reader of IS, but I was a little peeved when I read "Dressed to Kill" [December] and noticed that neither the Montreal Canadiens' (home and away) nor the Expos' (home) uniforms were mentioned. Come on guys!

These are great uniforms, although I might be a little partial.

ROBERT AGOURI
Montreal, Quebec

Congratulations on a sensitive, yet boldly honest picture of the 1981 baseball season in "Indecent Exposure" [December]. My only complaint is the commentary on Steve Carlton. I respect his consistency of excellence as a pitcher, but I also respect his consistent desire to keep his thoughts and feelings private.

Maybe someday we fans will be fortunate to have Steve Carlton write his story; maybe not. Either way, my memories of the tall lefthander with

the nervous facial twitch striking out all comers will live a long time.

BILL GORDON
Thermopolis, Wyoming

Your Bulldogs got crapped on in that Pitt stop and Nebraska didn't even fart, much less thunder against Clemson ["Georgia Runs to No. 1," January]. No wonder your "mag" is going out of business with writers like Jay Lovinger. Get your three-year-old kid to help you pick next time, if there is a next time. She could beat 2 out of 10.

DOC MORGAN
Greenville, South Carolina

Congratulations to Jay Lovinger for making a complete fool of himself predicting this year's bowl games. I especially enjoyed his Rose Bowl tout picking Iowa 30-10. Next year buy him a new coin to flip.

ROB MAY
San Clemente, California

Why belabor the obvious? Mr. Jay Lovinger's postseason bowl predictions were, at best, dismal, but in hindsight, humorous. His 2-8 record suggests that 1) articles editors have no business predicting anything, and 2) Jay might want to explore other professions. May I recommend canning peaches or selling driftwood door-to-door. Maybe now Mr. Lovinger has some respect for the Pitt Panthers. Anyone familiar with Pitt's defense knew that they would do the cha-cha on Herschel (84 yards on 25 carries) Walker's head. Here's hoping that INSIDE SPORTS allows Mr. Lovinger to make predictions on, say, the Little League World Series or the pro bowlers' tour during the coming year.

JOHN SNYDER
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

[Editor's note: Heartened by the enthusiastic reader response to his bowl picks, Mr. Lovinger sent IS a cable from his South American hideaway: WAIT TIL NEXT YEAR STOP By the way, Mr. Lovinger feels strongly that Marshall Holman will dominate this year's pro bowlers' tour—if he can stay out of the gutter.]

BY CHARLIE LEERHSEN

Dave Cowens

It peeves Dave Cowens to hear yet another person suggest that many athletes don't segue gracefully into Real Life.

"Oh, do they have problems?" he asks, sarcastically. "I've never noticed it being any great concern. Most guys, it seems to me, find their niche."

Cowens, who retired from his \$500,000-a-year job as a center for the Boston Celtics in 1980, has been the athletic director of Regis College, a small Catholic women's school in Weston, Massachusetts, since last March. Classified a Division III, Class C school, Regis seems to be all the word "niche" implies. But ask Cowens if he'll be happy forever at Regis and he goes back into the peeve-it. "What kind of question is that?"

Cowens' first assignment at Regis was to join a team overseeing construction of the school's \$3 million athletic center. With that facility now open, he has settled into a routine involving much telephone discussion of such matters as budgeting, scheduling and the purchasing of equipment.

One thing Cowens refuses to do is interfere with Regis basketball coach Deborah Caban. "Dave won't make the slightest suggestion unless I ask him for advice," Caban says. "That has happened only once. We were having trouble rebounding, and he came around and showed the girls how to box out under the boards."

Although he says that the Regis post is "more than a nine-to-five" job, Cowens maintains an "active involvement" in a basketball camp, a bottled-spring-water company and Lifestyle Management Systems, which he describes as "a company that goes into offices and assists in setting up programs to improve the health of employees." A bachelor for most of his



Cowens: Reasonably happy

10-year NBA career, Cowens is now married; he and his wife Deby, a nutritionist, live with their 22-month-old daughter, Meghan, in middle-class Needham, Massachusetts.

Cowens, 33, describes himself as "a fan, but not a rabid fan" of the team he once played for and (briefly) coached. "I don't have the time to see all the games."

Then he adds, "Just say I'm reasonably happy. And proud to have been a Celtic."

Jacques Lemaire

Those who can, do; those who can't, teach. Or so it is said by those who haven't met Jacques Lemaire. After 12 years (and eight Stanley Cup championships) with the Montreal

Canadiens, Lemaire abruptly quit in 1979 "to get the satisfaction of seeing young people grow and mature as hockey players under my guidance." His old wingers, Guy Lafleur and Steve Shutt, have not been so effective since losing their speedy center. But Lemaire, who is now an assistant hockey coach at the State University of New York at Plattsburg, says that he doesn't regret walking away from the money, glamour and glory of the National Hockey League.

Lemaire's retirement was precipitated by an offer to serve as player-coach for a Swiss second-division team, the Hockey Club de Sierre. "I learned a lot about teaching over there. Because all the players worked eight or nine hours a day at other jobs, I had to develop a sense of when to push them, when to lay off. I had to dispense the information carefully." Lemaire's team finished third, then second in its division during his two-year stint as coach.

A chance meeting with Plattsburg hockey coach Herb Hammond at a convention in Florida last May led to his present position. When Lemaire said he wanted to return to North America because his wife was homesick, Hammond told him that they might be able to work something out since Plattsburg is just 60 miles from Montreal. "And I'm glad we did," Hammond says. "He's a great communicator and he's been a real help to our offense."

Lemaire, 36, says that he wants to stay in academia—and out of the NHL. "You can't get close to the players in the pros. I believe in getting to know the people you're instructing." As for his former teammates, Lemaire says, "Some think I'm crazy. But they're happy when they see me, probably because they've never seen me so happy." ■

CHARLIE LEERHSEN is a Newsweek associate editor.

INSIDE TRACK

No matter how hard he tries, Boston defenseman Mike Milbury can't win. He was seen by millions as the arch-villain in New York, swatting a spectator with the fan's own shoe. So there's the native of Brighton, Massachusetts, playing another high-octane game for the home crowd, and what does he get? Boos from his neighbors and the designation from *Boston* magazine last year as "The Worst Professional Athlete" in Boston.

Crunch! Mike Milbury nailed another foe to the boards, but he will never get a vote as the National Hockey League's best defenseman because he is a dinosaur on ice; one of the last of the defensive defensemen. In the NHL board room, Mike Milbury, the radical, has championed players' rights in defiance of such power brokers as Alan Eagleson, but he has been maligned as a troublemaker who would do better playing than lobbying.

Milbury is an odd one. In an era when almost all players have opted for helmets, he has removed his and now plays with more élan than ever. Recruited by Colgate on a football scholarship, Milbury was lured to the varsity hockey team. He fell in love with Debbie Coda, a member of Colgate's women's hockey team. She became his most persistent critic—and aide. He was signed by the Bruins in 1976 and, a year later, amassed 166 penalty minutes, breaking the club record held by Hall of Famer Eddie Shore. Despite the hoots of fans and the barbs of critics, Milbury is regarded as a key player on a Bruin team enjoying a renaissance. Stan Fischler, co-author of *The Hammer: Confessions of a Hockey Enforcer*,

'As bizarre as it seems, fighting is a player's way of legislating in the game. It almost makes it saner.'



Mike Milbury

spoke with him for INSIDE SPORTS.

IS: How crushed were you when you learned you had been designated "The Worst Pro Athlete" in Boston?

MIKE MILBURY: I didn't think they'd raise a monument for me on top of Bunker Hill. Naturally, I wasn't tickled about it, but I'm mature enough to realize that I happen to be a well-rounded athlete. The man who made that judgment about me must have looked at my scoring stats and saw I had no goals all last season. When you think about it, though—assuming that what he said was true—it certainly must be to my credit that I've been able to survive in the NHL for six years as a regular. The funny

thing was my Christmas present from my grandmother: a subscription to *Boston* magazine.

IS: What's it like having fans at Boston Garden carping at a player who grew up right in the backyard of the arena?

MM: It's a family sort of relationship. The fans look at me as a cousin or their brother or a buddy from the street who made it to the top. I think they say to themselves, "Hey, why isn't he playing as well as I would be playing if I were out there?" They set high expectations, especially with offensive statistics and I'm a short-fall there. Playing in Boston has not been easy for me, but I'm not bitter. Sometimes I *do* get resentful that a local guy can't make an occasional mistake.

IS: Does the booing make you edgy?

MM: It used to put me on edge. I would say to myself, "Why would they want to do that to me? What good can it do?" They would get me uptight. I couldn't believe

that was their objective. At least I hoped it wasn't. But I've overcome the problem.

IS: How?

MM: I switched things about in my head. Instead of letting them get me down, I let them inspire me. It's more gratifying to turn the fans in my favor by playing well than by getting upset and worrying about them.

IS: Fans elsewhere aren't too crazy about you, either. A photo of you clobbering a fan with his shoe at Madison Square Garden in 1979 circulated around the continent. How do you feel about that?

MM: Looking back, it strikes me as a genuine farce. Few people were

aware of the facts. All they remember is seeing me with a guy's shoe in my hand, standing over him looking very much the bully. But I was in a great mood that night. We had just come up with a dramatic win over the Rangers. I don't like to spend too much time on the Garden ice because you never know what's going to come flying out of the stands and hit you in the head. So I rushed off the ice with goalie Gerry Cheevers and traipsed into the locker room. All of a sudden I looked around and realized nobody else was there. Then I heard a great roar from outside. That could mean only one thing: trouble. I dashed back to the rink and there were our guys heading into the stands, under attack from fans. My first reaction was, "Uh-oh, my friends are in trouble." The weird thing about it was that I wasn't angry. I was happy and also a little confused. I didn't even climb over the glass; I just walked around into the stands with my skates on and climbed the stairs in the direction of Peter McNab, who was battling with a fan.

IS: Why didn't you stay out of it?

MM: There was one feeling uppermost at the time—camaraderie. I wanted Peter to know that I was with him in case any other fan started trouble. So, even though Peter had pretty good control of the fan, I just grabbed him. Then the guy started to kick at me and continued to kick. In defense, I grabbed his leg. He was wearing those cheap, flexible loafers and one of them popped off his foot and he kept kicking. So I just took the loafer and whacked him once on the thigh; *not on the head*. It was as if to say, "Okay, that's enough, you're fighting a losing battle." But in the pictures and on the videotapes it looked much worse.

IS: You have frightened other people. Dave Schultz remembers a game when he thought you were going to kill him.

MM: Sorry, but this is another case of a grave distortion of the facts. What I did to Schultz was more out of a case of my fright than anything else. There had been a stoppage of play and a brawl broke out. It's commonplace for players who aren't even directly involved to grab a free opponent. Of all the guys on Los Angeles, Schultz was the only one left. He was standing there jawing off and I had to grab him before he popped somebody.

IS: Why didn't you leave well-enough alone?

MM: I was young and, to me, Schultz had the aura of a Superman. He was a big, tough guy and I saw

that I was in a position to neutralize him so I grabbed him from behind. I put him in a headlock and began choking him, although I didn't realize it.

IS: Schultz says you nearly choked him to death. He was really scared.

MM: The reason I didn't know how bad he was is because he didn't shout or say anything. But, now that I think of it, there wasn't much he could say; not with me having his neck in my grip (laughs). I just held on, didn't throw any punches. It certainly wasn't anything malicious or deadly on my part; just a question of survival.

IS: Speaking of survival, it's amazing how few defensive defensemen have survived in this period of higher

Football is
a tougher grind.
You're pounding
your head on
every play.

scoring. Your breed is almost extinct.

MM: Maybe now there are few of us left, but we will never be extinct. My prediction is that the pendulum will soon swing in the other direction and there will be a greater accent on defense again. Now you've got so many Europeans—who accent offense—in the NHL and a lot more teenagers just out of the Junior leagues. When these players get more big league experience, they'll learn the value of picking up a winger on the backcheck and making the good play defensively. They'll learn that such defensive maneuvers will pay off just as much as making a spectacular offensive move.

IS: Does it bother you that no matter how good you play defensively, you will never win the Norris Trophy as the league's best defenseman? The writers always pick players like Randy Carlyle, who score a lot of points.

MM: Many people have a shallow perception of hockey. They think those who get the points are the most important. It's true that you have to put the puck in the net to win, but guys like me have equally important jobs: keeping the puck *out* of our net.

IS: Fine, but wouldn't you like to change places with Randy Carlyle? He scored 83 points for Pittsburgh last season, was named to the first all-star team and won the Norris Trophy.

MM: Carlyle has never been in the Stanley Cup finals. I've been in them twice. What does it mean, winning the Norris Trophy? Carlyle won it and his club didn't go anywhere. I'm sure he would gladly have exchanged his trophy for reaching the finals.

IS: Think of all the glory you could have being a 40-goal scorer like Rick Middleton, for instance.

MM: No way. If you think there's pressure on me, it's nothing like what Middleton has to put up with. Fans don't expect me to score a lot, but they *demand* that Middleton score every time he gets the puck. If he has four games without racking up a point, his season is about shot in the fans' estimation. McNab had 21 goals halfway through the season, and people were saying he wasn't having a particularly good year. What do they expect of him? That's a helluva year. Yet, because he's a goal scorer, the fans demand more and more.

IS: Some people, your agent Art Kaminisky for one, say you are crazy to play without a helmet.

MM: Maybe you have to be a player to understand my reasoning, but I had reached a point where I found I was playing tentatively. A change was needed. I had to become more assertive. That's why I decided to scrap the helmet. I was saying, symbolically, "Screw it, I'm throwing caution to the wind." The result was that I started to play the rambunctious game I had been used to. Not that skating without a helmet is the best thing that ever happened to me. It has its drawbacks. Without it, I'm a much better target for the fans. I'm easy to pick out when they want to get on my case. When I wore the helmet I could easily be confused with (Brad) McCrimmon, (Mike) O'Connell or anybody else who was wearing a helmet on defense. It also can be positive if you play well. You become more apparent to management in a subtle way. Sometimes it can have a dramatic effect on management.

IS: Don't you worry about getting a shot in the head?

MM: I've taken a few but nothing serious; no head wounds, no cuts. The thing is it's so much cooler—especially at playoff time. To a certain extent it's exhilarating.

IS: Hockey players have a macho image, but would you say that football

or hockey is the tougher sport?

MM: Football is a much tougher grind. You're pounding your head and shoulders on every play. That makes for a hard mental grind as well. In hockey the hits don't come as often. But because the game is so fluid and there are so few stoppages of play, you never know when you're going to get belted. When I was recruited for Colgate's football team, I was an end. I got tired of banging heads on every play. It was just a matter of crunching my head into somebody's gut. There wasn't enough thinking in it for me.

IS: Have your features ever been rearranged in a hockey game?

MM: The worst was a fight I had while playing with Rochester in the American League. I bumped hard with a guy named Jacques Cossette along the boards. From the bench I heard one of our guys shout, "All right, you guys, knock it off." For some reason, I turned to my bench and as I did I lightened up on Cossette. At that moment he unloaded a left like you wouldn't believe. I threw a couple of halfhearted punches, but my heart—and nose—were not in it. That was nothing compared to what happened to me in the dressing room! The doctor stuck needles up both nostrils and another on the outside. Then he grabbed them in a vice of sorts and pounded it with a hammer to straighten it out. After he put the stitches in, the doctor said, "Now, get back out there, son!"

IS: Don Cherry was your coach at the time, as he was later in Boston. You seemed to have a father-son type of relationship with him, didn't you?

MM: Absolutely. Grapes is an unbelievable character; so alive, so volatile. He knew when I needed a boot in the ass and a pat on the back and I could never thank him enough. He's a guy who even gets pumped up over a conversation about John Wayne. I didn't particularly like John Wayne, and he would get all upset. "How could *anyone* not like John Wayne?" he'd shout at me. "Not like The Duke? You got to be crazy." Then he'd ask me who my favorite actor was and I'd say Woody Allen. With that, he'd call me a college freak; a hippie. Then we'd move on to the next topic. We would ride together a lot to the rink and he'd practice a speech he was about to deliver to one of the players, some dressing down. He'd already tried it on his dog Blue, his wife Rose, and his two kids before he even got to me.

IS: Did Cherry ever bawl you out?

MM: You bet he did. Grapes had

been with the Bruins while I was still at Rochester, and he called me up from the minors. Boston had already won the division championship, so I figured Grapes to be pretty low-key. Was I wrong! I played on the road, got back to Rochester at five in the morning, packed my stuff and headed for the Bruin game in Buffalo. Although not in the best of condition under the circumstances, I worked real hard and thought I was doing okay. But I came off the ice on one shift and Grapes stood behind me and ranted: "What the hell has happened to you? You're a damned pacifist. I don't believe it!" He chewed my ear off until I got on the ice again. I was devastated. Not long

Grapes is a guy
who even gets
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on John Wayne.

after that, before I was sent back to Rochester, a couple of us went to a bar. Somebody gave the waiter some trouble and the manager phoned Grapes to complain. Next thing you know, he showed up at the bar, saw me and screamed: "Goddamn rookie! Hanging on by a string. I can't trust you anywhere. Let's go!" Like a little schoolboy, I followed five paces behind all the way back to the hotel, with Grapes cursing me all the way. When I ran into him the next day, he just laughed. He had gotten carried away; it was typical Grapes.

IS: The beginnings of Cherry's bitter dispute with Harry Sinden (Boston GM) are said to have their roots in an argument about you. Cherry wanted you on the Bruins, but Sinden favored his No. 1 draft pick, Doug Halward. Do you recall that?

MM: Certainly. After I had played a year in Rochester I came to the Bruin training camp. Halward was there, too. If you assessed us on a game-by-game basis, you would have given me the nod over Halward in training camp. Halward hadn't played up to expectations, but they picked him over

me anyway. I think the decision was based on what Halward would do over the course of the season.

IS: Looking back, how do you feel about the incident today?

MM: I was disappointed at the time, but I don't have any bitterness about it today. I'm still not sure that they made the right decision, but I have a lot of respect for Sinden's judgments as well as I do for Grapes'. They had some differences over styles and, in that case, over two individual players. Grapes liked the kind of player I was and that hurt Halward to some extent.

IS: As a Bruin you have played for an interesting variety of coaches—Cherry, then Fred Creighton and now Cheevers. What were they like?

MM: Playing for Grapes was an incredible, one-in-a-million experience. He was gung-ho for his players; practice was fun. He was old school all the way. He played some favorites and I was one. By contrast, Creighton was low-key but still a solid, capable guy—a good coach. Things just didn't work out for him in Boston. In fact, it wouldn't have worked out for anyone who had to follow Cherry. Things had been so rosy under Grapes and everybody was feeling bubbly. Nobody knew what Creighton was about and he had different rules for different players. He made changes and those changes were resented. Creighton didn't get a good shot at being a good coach in Boston. He's a good guy and I have a lot of respect for him. Last year with Cheesie, he struggled with us and we struggled with him. For a while communication was nonexistent. There was still some feeling that Cheesie was a teammate instead of a coach. The result is that he has divorced himself of any social contact with the players and now thinks clearly as an individual and a coach. We now know that he expects certain things of us on the ice, not because he's a friend, but because that's our job. Last year that conflict between friendship and player-coach relationship was confusing.

IS: How much does intimidation have to do with winning?

MM: When the Bruins had people like Al Secord and John Wensink to go with Terry O'Reilly and Stan Jonathan, we probably did intimidate the opposition. It wasn't so much that we were capable of doing it as it was that people *believed* we were (chuckle). We had a lot of teams buffaloed, really! Even if we had an off-night and weren't up for rough stuff, the other teams would anticipate it. The Flyers do the same thing today. People believe

they're going to be nasty and intimidating. It does win games, although intimidation isn't the factor it was a few years ago.

IS: Cherry says the NHL is legislating toughness right out of hockey. What do you think?

MM: There isn't as much hard hitting as there was a few years ago because the emphasis is on speed and finesse.

IS: Should fighting be eliminated?

MM: I don't think so. This may sound like a cornball statement, but fighting is not a bad release. If somebody clips me with a stick or jabs me with an elbow or if some 5-3 guy comes at me with his stick over his head and clubs me, I'd take him and punch him in the nose and maybe he'll punch me in the nose and neither of us will really get hurt. He'll just have a sore nose, but he'll know that he'd better keep his stick down in the future. As bizarre as it seems, fighting is a player's way of legislating in the game. It almost makes it saner.

IS: Who are the toughest players?

MM: For nasty toughness, Wayne Cashman cannot be beat. He's one, mean son-of-a-bitch. At times I've seen him do some pretty crazy things. Brad Park, strangely enough, can be awfully nasty. O'Reilly has the most annoying kind of toughness possible because he just doesn't quit. For size alone, Stan Jonathan is a tremendous competitor. Even when he's losing, he's standing up, ready to plug away again. Montreal's Larry Robinson is 6-3, is unbelievably strong and tough. Anyone who fights him is insane. Garry Howatt of the Whalers is a little guy who takes on everybody whenever he feels slighted or whenever he feels the team needs a spark. Behn Wilson of the Flyers could well be the toughest guy in the league. His teammate, Paul Holmgren, also is strong and willing to fight for any reason—and sometimes for not so reasonable reasons (laughs). Finally, there's Al Secord of Chicago. He does a lot of body building and his body is awesome. He should be in *Playgirl* magazine. My wife is tough, too. She just broke her elbow in a karate class.

IS: Debbie used to go to the rink with you in Rochester at six in the morning, wearing figure skates, pregnant, and for 90 minutes would shoot the puck into the corner of the rink so you could become a better player. How would you describe her influence on your career?

MM: She salvaged it. From the time I was at Colgate through the Roches-

ter years and even now, she has had a positive impact on my playing. She's a good student of the game and knows when it's the right time to talk about it. She doesn't have to press it on me and we discuss it reasonably.

IS: Has Debbie's influence changed now that you are a veteran?

MM: She's less interested now that I've been successful, but when I needed her to be interested and supportive she was always there—and that's always been the most important thing.

IS: The Bruins have enjoyed the most success in stopping Wayne Gretzky. Why?

MM: We have a fairly experienced defense and know what to expect and

**The odds are
60-40 against a
players' strike.
There has been
some progress.**

we have a center, Steve Kasper, who watches Gretzky all the time. When Kasper's in trouble we all help out. We don't give Gretzky much room so he can wheel and deal and make his pinpoint passes.

IS: It's surprising that so few players try to hit Gretzky.

MM: No. Gretzky has this teammate, Dave Semenko, who stands 6-3 and goes 200 pounds and sits at the end of the bench growling at anybody who goes near Gretzky. Talk about intimidation, it's spelled Semenko. Most of the time players don't try to hit Gretzky because they know they'll have to pull themselves out of position to get him and since Gretzky is so elusive, they know they won't get a good piece of him. And if they don't get a good piece of him they'll wind up pulling his arm and getting a penalty. So, when you come down to it—starting with Semenko—there are a helluva lot of reasons why Gretzky gets a little extra room.

IS: Which forwards give you nightmares?

MM: Gretzky has so many assets you could make a catalog out of them.

He's shifty. He's got a good change of speeds and he's underestimated in terms of his ability to work hard. Another good one is Middleton. Rick and Mark Napier of Montreal have quick, deceptive speed. Give them just a little bit of room and they're dangerous. Ivan Boldirev of Vancouver doesn't have blinding speed but he can change speed well enough to be deceptive.

IS: Almost single-handedly—and against great odds—you took on the NHL's power broker Al Eagleson. You forced him to make some reforms in the players' association. Did the controversy with him affect your relationship with his clients?

MM: There wasn't any warmth toward me within the players' association, but I didn't detect any overt animosity either. A lot of people were trying to feel out what I was trying to accomplish. It's been a positive experience. I had no problem with any of my teammates who were represented by him.

IS: At one time Eagleson spoke negatively about you and you weren't exactly kind in your discussion about him. How do you get along now?

MM: Lately, we have had a good working relationship. We've been able to sit down and talk about a lot of different things and have no trouble doing that. I keep in the back of my mind that we had agreed that in the fall of 1982 Al would step down as head of the players' association or take the position on a fulltime basis, which is not the case right now.

IS: The players' association has been engaged in intense negotiations with the owners over a new collective-bargaining agreement. There has been talk of a strike. What are the chances of this happening next season?

MM: About 60-40 against a strike. There has been some progress made. There are still some pretty basic stumbling blocks to overcome. Something we've discussed, which I haven't put forth to the owners, is that if we really get to the shoving-match stage it'll all get tossed into the lap of an independent arbitrator.

IS: What does your future look like?

MM: I'd like to spend a few more years in the game, then spend a year or two in Europe. When we get back, Debbie will deserve a crack at a career. When that happens maybe I'll become the housefather to our three kids. I might also try graduate school.

IS: You might wind up as president of the NHL or head of the players' union someday.

MM: Thanks, but no thanks. ■

The Lure Of the Lock

BY PETE AXTHELM

At halftime of the Peach Bowl, many fans and handicappers probably were turning away from their television sets to consider Christmas debts, New Year's plans, perhaps even a few rare bowl-season moments with their families. West Virginia was running heavily favored Florida out of the stadium. Mountaineer backers had no cause for concern, Gator bettors no reason for hope. It appeared to be just another minor bowl game to be filed and forgotten.

But matters were not so simple for followers of the popular Boston-based touting service *Score*. Bob Dunbar and Bill Hilton, the masters of *Score*, had made the game their "Lock of the Year." And because Dunbar and Hilton had won with their lock game for all nine years of their service's existence, their selection had an E. F. Hutton-like effect on the betting marketplace. Bookmakers across the nation had drastically adjusted the line on the game, even taken it off the board. *Washington Post* columnist Andrew Beyer had become the latest of many media people to salute *Score* and its locks. Never known for his retiring ego, Beyer had gone so far as to write, "When I listened to the depth of *Score's* analysis . . . I realized how shallow and inadequate were my own efforts." This was a little like hearing Howard Cosell announce that some-

body else was the world's greatest sportscaster. *Score* had never enjoyed such publicity.

Now for the bad news. *Score's* Lock of the Year was Florida.

Dunbar and Hilton disdained any drastic measures and even recovered to pick a series of winners on non-lock games. They watched West Virginia's 26-6 victory separately, in their respective homes. "We like to go different places in such situations," joked Hilton. "That way one bullet can't get both of us."

More seriously, Hilton said, "It wasn't that painful to watch, because we didn't even have that silly hope

that a miracle would happen. We never had a chance. And the reaction hasn't been too bad. The way the line moved actually kept many of our customers from betting as much as they wanted to. Our influence on the betting turned out to be a blessing in disguise."

It is also fair to note that a 9-1 record still makes *Score* a 90 per cent winner in its decade of locks—an outstanding record by any handicapping standard. But the breaking of the lock streak, whatever it meant to *Score* and its clients, should be food for thought for all bettors.

Almost every gambler has succumbed at some point to the temptation to declare, "This horse can't lose," or "This game is over before it

starts." But when a tout tells a client that a wager is a certain winner, is he implying the game is fixed or the race set to music? Is he encouraging the naive to bet beyond their means in the eternal folly of expecting something for nothing?

Score implies nothing of the sort. The service has maintained the lock as a colorful marketing gimmick, and all but the most benighted bettors must realize that much of its advertising copy is tongue in cheek. But *Score's* success has spawned countless imitators, from the flamboyant to the nefarious.

On the latter end of the spectrum is a direct-mail operator named Mike Warren, whose ads are awash in undocumented claims and incredible promises: "Mike is shooting to win a million dollars. . . . You can make that and more, yourself, by confident playing of Mike's Gold Bowl selections." One weekend last fall, Warren released two locks. When both lost, he had the nerve to come back the next week with a Get-Even Lock. It also lost. In a similar vein, redeemed only by a hint of humor, another tout this season released his "Lock of Modern Civilization." That lost, too.

Back on earth, other services can document the fact, say, that their locks are winning at a 63 per cent pace. Now that happens to be a worthy percentage. But it is not a bet-the-chicken-ranch certainty—or a mortal lock.



ILLUSTRATION BY VICTOR JUHASZ

A bettor may be well-advised to follow someone who has such an edge, but he should never lose sight of the risk. Louis Aidala, who monitors the betting services for this column, estimates that 450 locks were issued by services this season and about 250 won. It was not unusual to find rival services predicting sure winners on both sides of the same game. The bettor who doesn't see the message in that probably deserves his fate.

This may strike the sophisticated gambler as obvious. But throughout history, long before locks were institutionalized by touting services, millions of gullible bettors have listened to the beguiling whispers of racetrack touts with "stable information" or bogus "fixers" of assorted events.

Some hustlers treat such suckers with barely concealed contempt. The famous turn-of-the-century con man Wilson Mizner was a prime example. According to his delightful biographer, Alva Johnston, Mizner "asserted that confidence men did not discover suckers. The suckers, he said, hunted up confidence men. . . . He regarded the sucker as an unconscious *agent provocateur*. . . . He particularly objected to Gold Coast punks who dangled inherited bankrolls before the eyes of resourceful men."

The immortal and scrupulously honest horse trainer Hirsch Jacobs could testify to the hardness of the sucker spirit. Back in the 1950s, a guy impersonating Jacobs convinced a high roller to bet on various sure things from the high-powered Jacobs stable. For a while the horses won, and the con man collected handsomely. Then the impersonator's horses hit a slump, and the victim complained to the police that Hirsch Jacobs was breaking him. The real Jacobs was called and met the sucker to prove that he had been bilked by an imposter. Slowly the truth dawned on the guy and he seemed to accept his fleecing with equanimity.

A few weeks later, Jacobs encountered the guy at the track. "Are you doing better on your own?" Hirsch asked pleasantly.

"Oh, no," the man said. "Just the other night, Eddie Arcaro called me with a horse that couldn't lose."

Among modern handicappers, Richie Bomze of *Sports Reporter* is one of the most sympathetic toward the potential "sure thing" sucker. A conservative on the issue, Bomze issues no lock games. "A lock is basically a con. It forces even fairly reasonable people to bet with too much confidence. I've

watched too many thousands of games to ever tell someone with a straight face that anything is certain. It's ludicrous to ignore all the crazy things that can happen in a sports event."

We all have a voluminous log of just those crazy things. For every lock that has won for *Score* or the rest of us, there seems to be one that has gone awry for reasons we never could have imagined. A sample:

■ Gerry Strine, author of *Covering the Spread*, knew he had a good thing when the San Diego Chargers hired aging John Unitas in 1973—and soon had to face the 19-point favored Steelers. Pittsburgh led 38-0 when Chuck Noll rested his regulars and went into a soporific prevent. The Steelers won 38-21 to smash that lock.

■ Sanford, a Florida trotting aficionado, once spotted a horse that was hopelessly handled by a terrible driver for several races—then claimed by a capable man. Certain that he would never know another poor day, he borrowed everything he could to bet on the horse's next start at Pompano Park. The horse was entered in the 10th race. After the sixth, there was a power failure in the tote board. The public-address announcer declared that the fans were welcome to watch the final races. But there would be no wagering. With his pockets bulging with money that he couldn't use, Sanford watched his sure thing win by five lengths—for no profit.

Like Bomze, several other reputable and successful touts are cautious about locks. "A cinch is something you use to keep a saddle on a horse," agrees Steven Turner of Texas Sports Wire. "I never advertise a lock. I'll tell a customer when I think there's a high percentage in our favor. But you can't go beyond that. This thing we're doing is still called gambling."

Jerry Michaels of Reno Sports Service does use locks, but he is aware of the pitfalls for the gullible. "I consider it more of an industry term, forced on a lot of us by the competition. In my terminology, a lock doesn't mean a sure thing. It means we've worked hard on a game, developed a strong opinion and are willing to go strongly on it ourselves. Our clients understand that. But if a gullible person takes the word the wrong way and believes he isn't gambling any more, there can be danger."

Michaels mentions that some services begin advertising a "playoff lock game" weeks in advance—before anyone knows who will be in the playoffs. "The customer who falls for that," he

says, "will buy a machine that is supposed to turn scrap metal into platinum."

Locks are not limited to paid touts. Andrew Beyer, whose speed figures place him among the top horse racing handicappers, is also given to the hyperbolic. In fact, he has enjoyed a good percentage with the lock horses he has published in his columns. A recent experience, however, showed how the lock concept can spin out of control for even the sharpest public selector.

Criticized by some Washington area bettors because all his locks seemed to win in Florida or New York, Beyer gave out his first local lock. He picked a horse at Laurel Race Course in Maryland and assured his readers that half their holiday shopping budgets would be taken care of by that race. That morning, a Washington bettor called me and screamed, "They better block the roads out of this town. Everybody's leaving for Laurel with cars full of money."

Beyer had hoped to get 9-5 on his sure thing. But the roads went unblocked and the mutuel windows were assaulted. In the first flash of the tote board, the horse was 1-5. Normally, Beyer wouldn't even have bet at that ridiculous price. But he felt a moral obligation to his followers, so he made a substantial wager. He also bet a solid perfecta with his horse above the horse rated second in his figures. That second choice won the race and paid \$28.40. Beyer's heavily favored lock was a dismal fifth.

"A debacle," he muttered from his hiding place at the end of a Georgetown bar. "I guess it just proves I'm human." But the real lesson was that the most well-intended lock from the best source can be broken in embarrassing fashion.

Harvey Pack, the sharp-tongued Professor of Equine Prophecy for the New York tracks, recalls the time a well-heeled novice announced that he was betting his entire bankroll on a short-priced favorite to show. The horse, who appeared a lock on paper, figured to pay the minimum of \$2.10 to show. But the bettor figured that was a bargain. "What bank," he asked Harvey, "pays you five per cent interest in a minute and 10 seconds?"

The horse ran fourth. "What bank," Harvey asked back, "makes you run around the block?" ■

PETE AXTHELM's "Lock of the Year" was Seattle plus 5½ over San Diego. Final score: Seattle 44, SD 23.

One Last Round With a Dream

BY H. TAFT WIREBACK

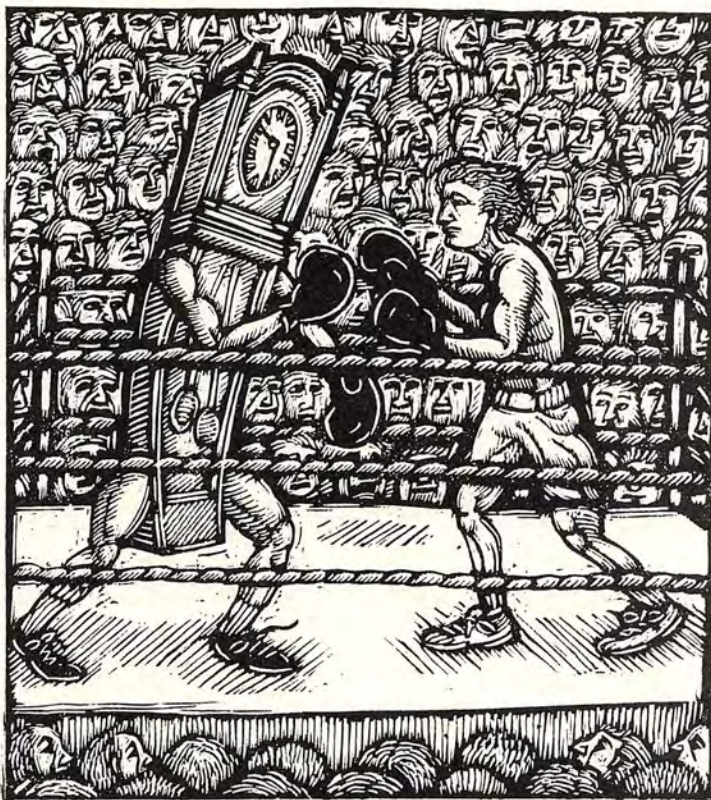
I didn't know that it was over, that it was all a pipedream, until midway into the second round. That was when, beneath the artificial sunshine of the ring lights, I was hit with a stiff punch just under the heart. In younger days, I could have shrugged it off. I would have sucked in the pain and come raging back.

This time, it was so much easier just to back away, to crouch into a defensive shell and make my opponent miss without making him pay for his mistakes. This time, the object was no longer to win. It was to see the matter through to an honorable conclusion, to get away from those hot lights as nearly unscathed as possible.

Thus, the end of my abortive campaign to become a professional fighter, almost a decade after a combination of circumstance and good advice convinced me to leave the game while still an amateur.

I had been like a lot of guys during those eight years before my comeback, guys who leave their sport before they take it as far as they can go with it. Mine happened to be boxing but it could have been soccer or baseball, race cars or rugby.

I was a former luminary on a small-town scale, living in the shadow of past glories, watching the horizon fade on his imagined potential. I'd get up some mornings and, dreading another



eight or 10 or 12 hours of office infighting, take what passed for a hard look at myself in the mirror. I'd think how clean the action used to be. How, in the ring during those moments after your bout and before the decision was announced, you always seemed to know what that verdict was going to be. None of the shapeless, fathomless subtleties of the corporate life.

"I still have it," I'd tell my mirrored self, rubbing the stubble along my jaw. "I could still do it."

The fights on TV were the worst. I'd sit watching, moving to the rhythm of the match, believing all the while that my reflexes were still sharp, that

the old verve lay there just waiting to be tapped. "Look at these bums," I might say to my wife. "Do you realize what these two butchers are *earning* for this mess?"

Perhaps I was naive, but it never occurred to me that it would be impossible to pick up where I had to let go. Hadn't I stayed in shape with a regular exercise routine? And there had been a few times when nostalgia had nudged me into my old bag gloves and a round or two of shadowboxing. Hadn't the moves been just as supple, the punches every bit as quick and accurate? And the all-important eye as steady as ever?

But my comeback never would have happened except that, one fine afternoon, the corporate carpet was whisked from beneath me. I wanted to hit someone, to smash my fist into something solid and feel the impact course up my arms and across my back. I went to the local gym, in Tallahassee where my corporate career had imploded, and I exploded my fury against heavy bags and sparring partners.

I began running a few miles every dawn, jumped rope 30 minutes a night in the gym, hit the bags, went the necessary rounds with Dennis and Tyrone and Conrad and Clyde. I was almost 30 but felt half that. It was heady. I felt sharp and strong and confident. I had dropped 20 pounds, was almost a middleweight again.

Then the man who ran the gym, Bill Maud, put a memo on the bulletin

board about a pair of fight cards. The first was a professional/amateur show in Fernandina Beach and the other was a regional AAU tournament a week later in Lake City.

I figured on trying the tournament. I'd go against the best amateurs around and, if I still had the tools and the will to use them, I could turn pro. "You ought to get your feet wet first," Maud said. He thought the pro/am card would be a good tuneup for the tournament.

Two other boxers from our gym were scheduled on the Fernandina show. We rode four hours across the state, arrived 20 minutes before the

matches began and left 20 minutes after they ended. We got home at 4 a.m., woozy from fitful catnapping and bleary periods of staring through the high beams at the broken white line on the interstate. We got \$50 for expenses and had supper at midnight on our way out of town. We ate hamburgers. We ate them on the road.

My fight was a cinch, although it contained a pretty cruel surprise. I had climbed into the ring thinking that it was an exhibition . . . no decision, no pressure, just get out on the canvas and do a tap dance. That was before the emcee spoke into the microphone.

"Three rounds to a decision."

I walked away with a unanimous win, though. The other guy had a dozen fights compared to the 60 I had before calling it quits in 1973.

My comeback fell apart the next week, at the tournament. It began going wrong almost as soon as we got to the auditorium. The only thing that went right was the fear, which always pincers your stomach the moment you walk into the arena and see the ring and know that—in a matter of hours—you must step through those ropes. The fear was all right. I swallowed it, the way you have to, put it in a small box that you closet away and tried not to think about it anymore.

But then there was the weigh-in. I came in at 157 pounds, one over the limit. I had to put on my robe, stuff towels under my street clothes and jump rope in the dressing room. Sweating, I made another trip to the scales.

"156," said the official. "And a quarter."

"Hey, that's all right," somebody else said. "He's got his trunks on. They weigh that much."

The man at the scales wrote "156" beside my name.

It was about 10 minutes later when they told me my first match was with Bruce Johnson, then the state's amateur champ in his division, a powerful kid who had just been nominated to represent the United States in international competition.

It was midafternoon, leaving me enough time to have a light meal that could be digested before the fight. At a restaurant around the corner, I watched the traffic pass out front, marveling at the tranquility of nice people going to their nice destinations.

There I sat, an exiled corporation man slurping beef broth and waiting nervously to trade punches with a kid two-thirds my age. I turned to my treasures, my memories. I remem-

bered starting out as a pudgy teenager with a collection of fight magazines and a speed bag in his basement. I remembered listening to my great-uncle tell stories of his days as a professional boxer, watching him clench and unclench those steel-trap fists as he told, and wanting more than anything to have my own stories to tell. Then my first fight, a whirl of commotion that ended in defeat, painful and humbling. Then my first win and more wins and then fighting on the undercard of a Muhammad Ali exhibition, the feeling of stepping into the same square spotlight that soon would fall on The Greatest. Then the best fight of my career, in the quarterfinals of the 1972 Philadelphia Golden Gloves, decisioning Chickie Mauro when everybody said he couldn't be beaten.

Later, at the arena, we fighters sat in a dim cubicle off the stage that supported the ring. We could look up a cluttered passageway and see two other boxers flailing at each other. The backdrop to our conversation was the ebb and flow crowd noise, the bravos and the catcalls.

In those waning moments before pacing into the unnatural glare of the lights and suffering that meaningless blast of sound from the bleachers and feeling the chill in your solar plexus—in the moments before all that—you are numb. You have made yourself numb. You have closed the closet on that box of fear. You know who your opponent is, what he looks like, that he sits in the opposite dressing room steeling himself as you steel yourself. You can't imagine facing him in that bright and loud place. You don't even try. You feel nothing, not for the sore fighter who has just come back from a thrashing nor for the victor chattering elatedly with his proud handlers, nor for yourself.

Maybe the numbness was too great in me that night. The edge was missing. I was too old or perhaps too jaded to believe the great and necessary fiction of every competitor . . . that he *must* win. I had been around too much, watched the crowd disperse too often, seen the ring torn down and trucked away too many times. Win or lose, tomorrow would come. The challenge was not emerging victorious; it was simply to keep that box of fear closeted.

The challenge ended with the process of getting into the ring, mounting it and ducking between the ropes. That was when the bud of nervousness

dynamited from my carefully constructed box. It was actually going to happen now, the hitting and the hurting. There was an instant of almost paralyzing fear. Then it was business as usual. I was at home even if it was only my second visit in eight years. I knew this place, what to do here, especially against a puncher like Johnson. Jab and move. Stick, stick, stick. Don't let him cut off the ring. Do that and you'll come through all right, maybe even win.

We had the 10th fight, the semi-windup, and it got confusing soon after we confronted each other at ring center. We squinted into each other's eyes, the way you do to let the other know that you don't fear him, then went to our corners. Before the bell could ring, though, one of the judges asked if I was Johnson and he was me. There were only two of us there but it seemed to take a gut-wrenching eternity before they figured it out.

Johnson burst from a crouch and raced across at me. I did the appropriate. I got on my bicycle and backpedaled. It was a long round, with me moving behind my jab and Johnson right on top of me, always right there, always pressing. I was landing my left but he was punishing me to the body. It was like tussling with a hurricane. By the end of the round my breathing was too heavy, my legs already at the point where they felt divorced from my trunk. My jab had no snap.

Then, a minute or so into the next round, he caught me with that punch under the heart and it was all over. My comeback dashed into pieces so small that you could never fashion another pipedream from them. I was a once and former athlete, long past his prime, hurting and holding on, waiting desperately for a second wind that he knew would never come.

Never.

I bobbed and ducked and held on until the ref stopped it, just before the close of that round.

Back in the dressing room I stuffed my robe and trunks into a duffel bag. Two fresh fighters were in the ring. There was new applause. Everyone's attention was riveted on the latest clash, my few moments of pain and truth already forgotten.

But I had no doubt that I was a lucky man, lucky because life had given me, unlike a lot of people, the opportunity to lay my most foolish dreams to rest. Where they belonged. ■

H. TAFT WIREBACK is a freelance writer living in Concord, New Hampshire.

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Chemistry on the Air: There's No Formula

BY RON POWERS

John Madden was an accident. Al McGuire was an afterthought. Summerall & Brookshier looked like the right stuff—for a while. (So did Martin & Lewis.) No scientific theory can explain Bob Trumpy and Bob Costas. Earth to Lou Brock, Earth to Lou Brock ... your message is garbled. Please re-copy.

All of this is by way of saying that if you wonder what the formula is for selecting TV sportscasters and pairing them up into announcing teams, you are not alone. The three network sports divisions would like to know, too. While no one has yet accused them of poring over chicken entrails, insiders do concede that the process gets a little disheveled. There has been screaming in the executive suites, there have been snits. There have been bright ideas that turned out not so bright. (Anybody here remember Alex Hawkins? Or Fred "The Hammer" Williamson?) There have been—well, there have been telephone calls between CBS and Bobby Knight. (Imagine the fun of watching CBS pick up the first technical foul in its 54-year history.)

So, yes, you can say that the network sports brain trusts are a long way from fail-safe when it comes to making microphone magic. The technology end of it they can handle. But ask them for human chemistry at the mike, they're likely to give you Bud

Collins and Rosie Casals.

This seat-of-the-pants approach to announcing teams is especially strange when you consider how meticulous the rest of television is about picking its on-air talent. How meticulous? Oh, about as meticulous as gene-splicing. Before a TV news department would dare unleash an anchorperson on the public, that individual would undergo the Ordeal by Market Research. Sample audiences in shopping malls would be asked to pass judgment on his "warmth" and "recognizability." Other volunteers would view his videotapes with electrodes fastened to their fingertips to measure excitation lev-

el—the famous "galvanic skin response" test. In extreme cases, a network executive might even venture a professional opinion. In sports, it's often, "Hello, Ilie—here's the mike."

In the absence of a more "scientific" recruiting system, word-of-mouth plays a surprisingly large role. The pipeline for choosing color men—nearly always ex-players and coaches—often originates with public-relations directors of the various pro teams. "When a certain player is reaching retirement age, we start pursuing him," says veteran NBC director Ted Nathanson. "Usually a PR director we respect will tell us whether he can talk, how he conducts himself."

Play-by-play men, on the other hand, usually reach the network level after proving themselves at local affiliate stations. The savvier ones flood the network sports divisions with audition tapes of themselves in action. Sometimes this process works, sometimes it backfires.

"The way we got Dave Rowe [the former Oakland lineman] as a color man," recalls Nathanson, "was by accident. Some game announcer in Oakland grabbed Rowe one day and said, 'I'm in a spot. Be my color man for one quarter.' This same guy later sent us an audition tape of himself and Rowe. It was sensational. So I hired Rowe."

"There is surprisingly little market research," concedes Kevin O'Malley, executive producer of college sports for CBS, "especially when you consider that these days,

the vast majority of the mail we get is about announcers."

One reason why it is so hard may seem surprising: The pool of sportscasting talent in this sports-happy country is simply not that deep. O'Malley, like his counterparts at NBC and ABC, spends countless hours looking at videotapes of regional announcers. The best of them are very good indeed. "On the other hand," says O'Malley, "I hear a lot of heavy regional accents, I hear a lot of 'homers,' I hear a lot of guys trying to copy Don Meredith or John Brodie or every other ex-player color man you ever heard."



O'Malley and CBS seized on one popular substitute for "scientific" discovery: Raid a bona-fide star away from the other guys. NBC's college basketball announcing team—Dick Enberg, Al McGuire and Billy Pack-
er—was on its way toward becoming the most celebrated trio since Cosell & Co. It had—well, it had *chemistry*.

"Chemistry." A 1960s Tinseltown tag; when used by anyone in tinted Polaroids, it refers to the happy combination of on-screen personalities that sends the audience up in smoke, or produces widespread outbreaks of the jim-jam-jeebies. (See "market research," "galvanic skin response.")

No one knows exactly what "chemistry" is. We might as well have a go.

Cosell, Gifford and Meredith have "chemistry." Cosell, Gifford and Williamson did not. Joe Garagiola and Tony Kubek had "chemistry" for several years on NBC baseball telecasts; lately it's been ebbing. In tennis, Bud Collins and *no one* have "chemistry." Summerall and Brookshier had lots of it for a while calling pro football on CBS; they lost it; now each has regained some of it with a new partner. NBC's Costas and Truitt have it, but unfortunately it is the kind that tends to explode inside the bottle. Boxing coverage can hardly be hurt by lack of chemistry; golf coverage can't be saved by its presence. And so on.

While these are subjective opinions, maybe we're on to some general conditions here. For "chemistry" to work, there has to be a certain unconsciousness of the microphone itself—or what some broadcasters call the ability to "talk through" the mike, directly to the audience. That ability is rare. A few wise veterans, who are conscious of the mike every waking moment of their lives, have learned to fake the spontaneity. Rarer still.

Don Meredith may understand coldly by now the apparent blurring quality that makes him charming on the air; if so, he has learned to underplay it. Williamson, by contrast, never stopped trying to make love to the mike. And the tension between him and Cosell and Gifford went flat.

Joe Garagiola was an untutored, spontaneously funny guy when he started broadcasting St. Louis Cardinal games with Harry Caray a quarter-century ago. He is still capable of warmth and wit. But over the years, Garagiola developed a nightclub comic's love for the well-worn gag; his responses to Kubek in recent seasons might have been punched up from a computer bank. Garagiola's tendency



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to thump the tub for club owners, Chrysler and other authority figures has not helped balance this over-programmed image; he's becoming the Bob Hope of sports.

Bud Collins' unending stream of fractured aphorisms (his labeling, at Wimbledon, of Princess Diana as "the rookie housewife-to-be" probably deserves to be preserved somewhere in Naugahyde) break down any illusion that he and his partner are just sharing the excitement on the court. John McEnroe and the umpire have better chemistry than Collins & Co.

Bob Trumpy's affliction—the thing that keeps him from truly cooking with the solidly professional Costas—is what you might call the "Charles Bronson Syndrome." The former Bengal tight end is an unreconstructed jock; as such, he has little use for—well, sportswriters and sportscasters, among others. He favored Jet quarterback Richard Todd over the writer Todd creamed; he doesn't think the refs should call out the number of a *penalized player*, f'gawshsake. After a few minutes of this to-the-right-of-Attila-the-Hun raving, the comebacks from Costas become a little strained.

And so on.

But back to Billy Packer—whom we left, a while back, on the way to superstardom with Enberg and McGuire. Along came CBS with its new NCAA contract. Scratch Packer—leaving Enberg and McGuire to speak to one another without a translator. Point, CBS.

But even here, some questions of judgment persist. Packer is a fine announcer. (All right, sometimes he thinks he's still a coach—during CBS's season-opening telecast of the Michigan-Arkansas game, Packer said he thought Michigan sub Leslie Rocky more should be in the starting lineup.) But being a fine announcer isn't the same as *being Packer-McGuire*. The edgy, half-serious bickering that went on between them at NBC had a strange, dangerous appeal that sometimes nearly submerged the game. Now Packer is teamed with a competent but unsurprising play-by-play man in Gary Bender. The air gets a little thick with the Xs and Os of inside basketball when these two technicians get their lips loosened: One yearns for an occasional "eat carrots!" from one of them.

All of which leaves McGuire as exhibit "A" in the argument that you don't need market research for sportscasters—because when the gut-reaction process works, it really works.

Feed McGuire's dossier into a computer and the computer would spit it right out again. His voice is too high. His vocabulary is limited. "I don't have the nicety way of sayin' it," McGuire says. "I can't say too much genuineness without givin' a dig." As for on-air technique, McGuire has made a point of never once looking at himself on videotape. He is a pure natural, a guy who never thought about TV theory, but whose instinct for the medium is dead-on. "I know where I'm good. You must start me. You must start me." Cagney at court-side—the kind of raw force who can make out in a random-chance universe.

If the truth be told, McGuire burst on the NBC scene in a kind of spontaneous combustion: It wasn't the Big Peacock, but his two on-air colleagues who first understood the former Marquette coach's offbeat appeal.

"It was never intended for us to be a three-man team," recalls Packer. "Al was hired to do halftimes and pieces from the locker rooms. But after one game, Dick and I said, 'This guy belongs at the table.'" So much for corporate planning.

McGuire's remaining partner, Enberg, offers the perfect contrast in announcing styles. Enberg is the kind of guy television would create, and clone, if it could. Smart, discreet, velvet smooth, utterly self-aware, Enberg is every inch the Emmy-winning announcer of the 1980s. Perhaps he is a little too much at home with the language of Newspeak ("Richard Todd is *audibilizing* on this count"), but Enberg is, on balance, a fine instrument; he'll stand up for years.

Enberg can say the genuineness. He can also, given the right (or wrong) circumstances, begin to emit little wisps of electrical smoke about the ears, the sign of a splendid machine malfunctioning.

One such occasion unfolded December 12, when Enberg called the Jets-Browns game without a color announcer—an event that NBC promoted as though it were the Agony of St. Richard, as though a phalanx of network tribunes had lashed him to the Peacock microphone and dragged him to the deserted booth atop Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, there to leave him for four quarters with only an earthen bowl of Perrier and a few scraps of caraway bread sticks for sustenance.

All the ballyhoo about the "lone announcer" may have had little effect on Joe Sixpack, but it certainly seemed to have taken hold of Enberg's imagi-

nation. Who among the many millions of viewers on that raw afternoon will ever forget his blurted cry of supplication in the third quarter—"This has been much too difficult without the analyst!"—a cry prompted perhaps by an emotional long-distance, over-the-air telephone call from his estranged color man, Merlin Olsen.

The point being, you can take the business of drawing attention to the on-air talent a shade too far.

Of almost comparable force to McGuire at NBC—and an equally good case for the ultimate value of instinct in choosing game announcers—is CBS's John Madden. All that this non-broadcaster has done since joining the CBS pro football corps is set a new standard for play-by-play professionalism.

Fans in the living room are familiar with Madden's breathy, arm-flapping humanity: "I'll tell ya now, dat's a fullback! Dat's da way ya wanna run da ball! You just take dat ball an' boom! Run it right up da middle—shoulders square an' now watch dis . . . he breaks a tackle right dere! Git dose knees goin'! Feet goin'! Keep yer head up so you can see! Great drive! Well, I tell you, dat is determination!"

Dat is determination. Behind the scenes at CBS, Madden is held in awe because of his huge capacity for preparing for a telecast: depth charts, injury lists, game films, visits to the teams' practice sessions. Madden's businesslike approach to the craft of announcing has, in the opinion of those who've watched him, caught on throughout the demoralized CBS ranks. He seems to have revitalized Summerall, who had been drifting toward indifference with his good buddy Brookshier.

Can you imagine John Madden surviving a market-research survey?

Maybe someday the networks will hit on a quality-control method of producing perfect proto-play-by-play personnel every time—a sort of *Stepford Wives* of sportscasting, where everyone looks and sounds like Don Criqui. Maybe I'm woozy on light-beer commercials, but I hope they don't. I like the guys who don't have the nicety way of sayin' it, who can't say too much genuineness without givin' a dig. Hell, I even liked Alex Hawkins. ■

RON POWERS is a television-and-radio critic who received a Pulitzer Prize. His most recent book is *Toot-Toot-Tootsie Good-bye, a novel*.

DWIGHT EVANS SHOULD HAVE BEEN MVP

*Why? Because
Total Average says so.*



he biggest flop of 1981 was George Brett, despite a .314 batting average that shielded him from criticism. Also among the Fizzles of the Year were Reggie Jackson, Willie Randolph and Fred Lynn.

The MVP in the American League last season should have been Dwight Evans of the Boston Red Sox. In fact, over the past several seasons, Evans has improved more steadily and dramatically than any player in baseball, moving from mediocrity to stardom.

The best offensive player in baseball today—and one of the 20 best in history—is Mike Schmidt. And he's getting better every year.

The careers of Jim Rice, Dave Parker and Steve Garvey are going down the drain. And fast. All three are in a decline so precipitous that none now can be considered more than an average player.

A lineup of the most underrated players of 1981 would include rookie catcher Rich Gedman, first baseman Jason Thompson, second baseman Joe Morgan, shortstop Bill Almon, third baseman Bill Madlock, designated hitter Cliff Johnson and outfielders Evans, Chet Lemon and Gary Matthews. All ranked first, second or third offensively in their leagues at their respective positions last year.

Who are the worst players in baseball? In the National League in 1981, they were Bob Boone, Enos Cabell, Doug

BY THOMAS BOSWELL

Flynn, Bill Russell, Ken Reitz, Rufino Linares, Ellis Valentine and Tony Scott. These eight players—believe it or not—all ranked dead last in offense at their respective positions.

These conclusions may sound a bit outlandish. Yet all are logical, perhaps even inescapable.

Says who, you ask?

Says Total Average.

Last year, we introduced a new baseball statistic that was as simple in theory as it was dramatic and controversial in implication—Total Average. The claims were brazen: "A statistic that comes closer to being the ultimate offensive yardstick than anything before it."

This winter, TA—the stat that combines the virtues of batting average, slugging average, on-base percentage and stolen-base proficiency—is back to stir up hot-stove trouble.

The TA theory is simple. Baseball's fundamental units of measurement are the base and the out. Each base is one step closer to home plate. Each out is a

single step nearer the end of an inning. That's Total Average—the ratio between the bases a player gets for his team and the outs he costs his club.

For example, look at Mike Schmidt, the best Total Average player in 1981, and the 16th-ranked TA player in history. During the truncated season, Schmidt had 60 singles, 19 doubles, two triples, 31 home runs, 73 walks, 12 stolen bases and was hit by four pitches. That's 317 bases. Then subtract his hits (112) from his at-bats (354). Add the four times Schmidt was thrown out stealing, plus the nine times he grounded into double plays, since each cost his team an extra out (sacrifices and sac flies are not included). Now, divide all his bases by all his outs (255) and you have his total average: 1.243.

The beauty of Total Average is threefold. First, players with different styles and strengths can be measured on the same scale. The bunt hit, the walk, the steal and the home run are all given their proper due. Second, the

Boston's Dwight Evans: Hidden star surfaces.

advantage that a good player in a great lineup has over an equally good player in a weak lineup is minimized by ignoring both runs and RBIs, which are, in part, tied to the performance of teammates. Third, and perhaps most important, TA is elegantly simple. Easy to compute, hard to dispute.

Let's go ahead and say it: Total Average is the baseball statistic that should have been invented first, a century ago. It's the simplest, most basic, most undeniable and fairest available measure of a player's overall ability. Not a perfect measure, not even close to perfect. But the best simple method, nevertheless. Then, to refine what TA tells us, to smooth off the rough edges of some of the exaggerations and misperceptions that Total Average can produce, we should look at other stats.

For instance, Tony Armas' TA was merely good (.714), not great, because he seldom drew a walk (19) or stole a base (5), he struck out more than anybody in baseball (115) and he had a mediocre batting average (.261). In other words, the man makes an enormous number of inning-killing outs (only Jim Rice in the AL made more outs last year), while accumulating bases in, basically, only one way—with extra-base hits. But Armas drives in lots of runs. He's clutch. Thus, Armas is more valuable than his TA would indicate.

In other words, we should start with TA, then modify our appraisal by looking at other pertinent stats. After all, no system of total offensive measurement can ever really approach the ideal too closely. Why? Because all bases are not created truly equal. Is a walk 100 per cent as good as a hit? Or only 85 per cent, or 75 per cent, as good? And is a home run worth exactly four times as much as a steal? Or only three-and-a-half times as much?

This question is a cosmic stumper in the baseball universe. America is loaded with stat freaks (Bill James of *Baseball Abstract*), Ivy League computer experts (the Princeton-based Player-Win Average), cottage-industry consultants (Pete Palmer and Steve Mann) and even an entire fraternity—the Society for American Baseball Research—dedicated to concocting a perfect offensive stat.

However, the more ambitious the stat, the more complex and arbitrary it almost always becomes. What it gains in sophistication and the intuitive wis-

NL LEADERS

CATCHERS

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Darrell Porter, St. L.	112	140	.800
Joe Nolan, Cin.	122	172	.709
Gary Carter, Mont.	203	291	.698
Milt May, SF	156	229	.681
Alan Ashby, Hou.	129	194	.665
Bruce Benedict, Atl.	144	226	.637
Terry Kennedy, SD	171	276	.620
Jody Davis, Chi.	87	141	.617
Mike Scioscia, LA	133	220	.605
John Stearns, NY	127	211	.602

SHORTSTOP

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Dave Concepcion, Cin.	214	310	.690
Garry Templeton, St. L.	153	253	.605
Larry Bowa, Phila.	164	273	.601
Craig Reynolds, Hou.	145	248	.585
Chris Speier, Mont.	128	249	.514
Rafael Ramirez, Atl.	125	246	.508
Frank Taveras, NY	112	225	.498
Ozzie Smith, SD	183	370	.495
Tim Foli, Pitt.	119	247	.482
Ivan DeJesus, Chi.	161	336	.479

FIRST BASE

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Jason Thompson, Pitt.	171	175	.977
Keith Hernandez, St. L.	249	275	.905
Dave Kingman, NY	223	284	.785
Bill Buckner, Chi.	234	309	.757
Warren Cromartie, Mont.	191	260	.735
Pete Rose, Phila.	221	303	.729
Dan Driessen, Cin.	134	187	.717
Chris Chambliss, Atl.	212	306	.693
Cesar Cedeño, Hou.	154	236	.653
Steve Garvey, LA	206	322	.640

THIRD BASE

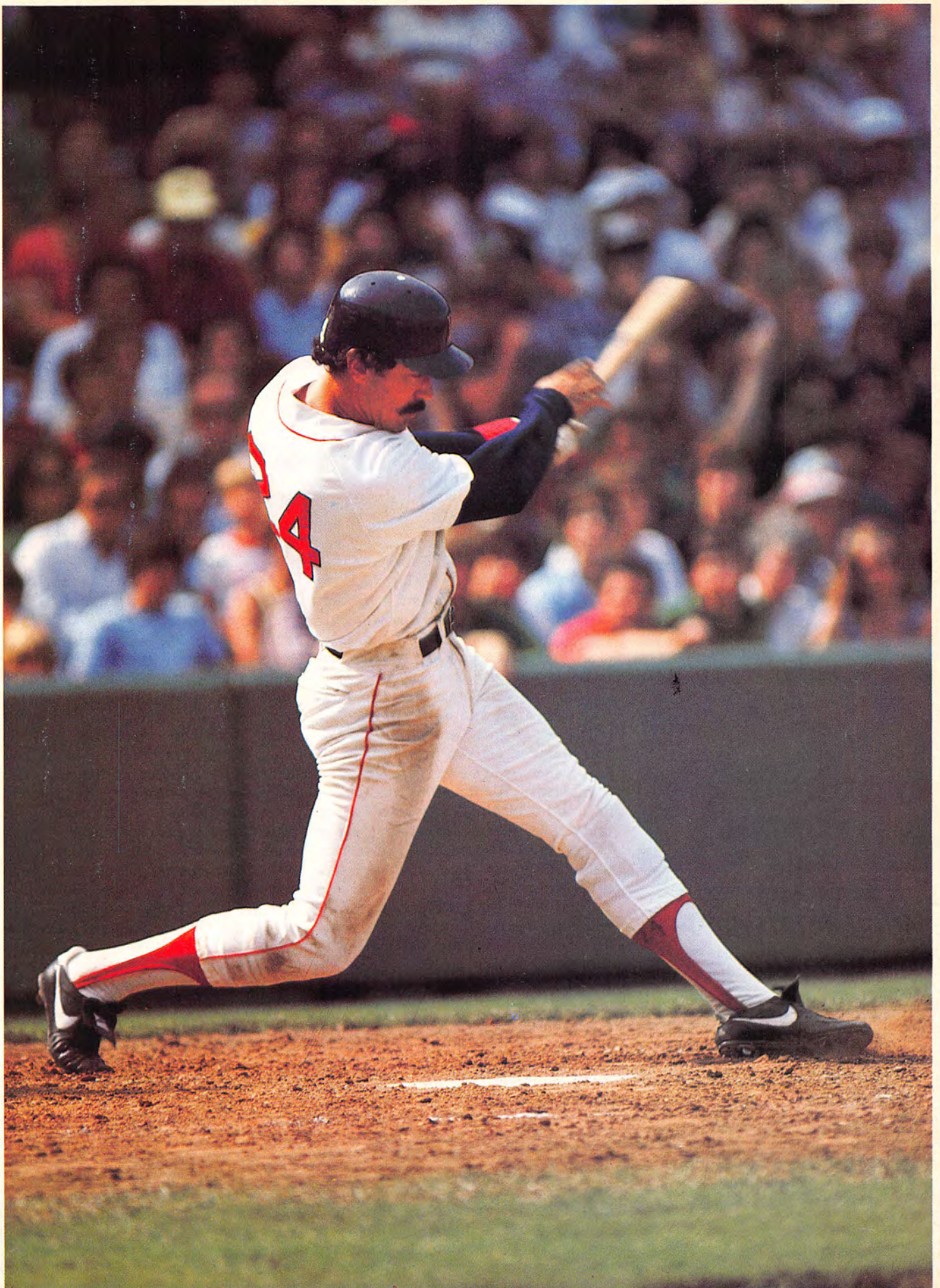
	BASES	OUTS	TA
Mike Schmidt, Phila.	317	255	1.243
Bill Madlock, Pitt.	193	195	.990
Ron Cey, LA	191	231	.827
Bob Horner, Atl.	173	226	.765
Darrell Evans, SF	207	272	.761
Art Howe, Hou.	188	265	.709
Hubie Brooks, NY	180	262	.687
Ken Oberkfell, St. L.	190	282	.674
Luis Salazar, SD	189	294	.643
Larry Parrish, Mont.	162	274	.591

SECOND BASE

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Joe Morgan, SF	196	242	.810
Manny Trillo, Phila.	177	259	.683
Ron Oester, Cin.	185	271	.683
Tommy Herr, St. L.	205	317	.647
Davey Lopes, LA	106	179	.592
Phil Garner, Pitt.-Hou.	137	233	.588
Rodney Scott, Mont.	165	281	.587
Joe Pittman, Hou.	61	104	.587
Glenn Hubbard, Atl.	165	285	.579
Juan Bonilla, SD	158	278	.568

OUTFIELDERS

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Tim Raines, Mont.	255	236	1.081
Andre Dawson, Mont.	286	285	1.004
Lonnie Smith, Phila.	127	130	.977
Gary Matthews, Phila.	239	261	.916
George Foster, Cin.	273	304	.898
George Hendrick, St. L.	240	294	.816
Leon Durham, Chi.	203	250	.812
Gene Richards, SD	234	294	.796
Steve Henderson, Chi.	167	217	.770
Pedro Guerrero, LA	202	264	.765



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dom of its creator, it loses in simplicity and objectivity. How can you love a stat, or use it in arguments, if you can't really explain it?

Let's get our bearings.

Any Total Average over 1.000 is fabulous. Last season, only four players managed the feat: MVP Schmidt, rookie Tim Lincecum (1.081) with 71 steals in 88 games, Evans (1.013) and NL MVP runnerup Andre Dawson (1.004). Batting champ Madlock, in by far his best season, came close at .990, as did spectacular Rickey Henderson (.968). Note, please, that this top half-dozen contains almost every style of player from slugger to speedster to high-average hitter to all-rounder.

For reference, only 17 players in history have career TAs over 1.000. Schmidt, the NL's TA champ in both his MVP years, has just joined that exalted company—led by Babe Ruth (1.432), Ted Williams (1.369) and Lou Gehrig (1.255)—at 1.002.

Evans is an ideal example of how TA gives credit to hidden stars. In his past five full seasons, Evans' TA has shown spectacular improvement—from .716 to .756 to .791 to .855 to 1.013. This guy's obviously a learner. In 1981, unbeknownst to many outside Boston, Evans led the AL in total bases and walks, and tied for the lead in home runs. He was second in runs and on-base percentage, third in slugging percentage and fourth in RBIs.

If 1.000 is great, and .900 for a career ought to get you into the Hall of Fame, then what's average?

Baseball's TA for 1980 was .658—or a ratio of roughly two bases for every three outs. That's your average ballplayer. Last season, a down year for offense, the game's overall TA dropped to .627.

Total Average, however, varies dramatically by position. An outfielder, first baseman or third baseman—the traditional power positions—needs a TA in the .700s to claim he's earning his keep. And he had better be in the .800s before claiming to be a first-class star. A shortstop, second baseman or catcher, by contrast, must be measured by a different standard. Those spots demand defense first. As a rule, players at those positions have TAs which are 100 or more points lower than those at the power spots.

The perfect illustration is Garry Templeton with a .605 TA. That ranks him second among NL shortstops. However, such a humble mark (which exposes Templeton's paucity of walks, extra-base hits and steals), would have ranked him 11th at first base, 10th at

third and 29th among outfielders.

Conversely, players like Garvey (.640), Parker (.681) and Rice (.702) are above average overall, but pathetically low at their positions. Garvey ranked 19th among 26 first basemen, while Rice was 33rd and Parker 38th among starting outfielders.

TA often shows the direction a player's career is taking. Some, like Evans, show constant improvement. The TA of Eddie Murray, to take another example, is straight up: .729, .811, .834, .846, .875. Other careers, like those of Garvey, Parker and Rice, are at a crisis point. Garvey's four-year slide has been gradual—.806, .766, .724, .640—though he remains a fair run-producer. The lazy Parker, who has suffered a fat attack, and the surly Rice, whose eye may trouble him, have fallen with a crash. Parker since 1978: 1.042, .961, .721, .681. Rice since 1979: 1.002, .789, .702.

Year-to-year performance fluctuates more than fans think. A perfect example is Brett. On the surface, the difference between his .390 batting average in 1980 and his .314 mark of 1981 seems great, but hardly catastrophic—a matter, perhaps, of a couple of singles per week.

But TA shows how much Brett really fell: 441 points from a major league-leading 1.278 to .837. Brett made 40 more outs in 1980 than in 1981, but also had 162 more bases. In other words, for Brett to have brought 1981 up to his level of 1980, he would have had to have come to bat 80 more times—and hit 40 more home runs.

In the collapse department, Ellis Valentine was next, falling 397 points from a star level of .887 to a hopeless .490. Other enormous flops were Jackson (down 351 points), Randolph (342), Ted Simmons (325), Lynn (311), Ben Oglivie (300) and Cesar Ceno (277).

The biggest Total Average gainer of 1981 was Madlock who, despite two previous batting titles, had never been a TA star; last year, he jumped 304 points, improving simultaneously in power, average, walks and even steals.

Next came Tom Paciorek, up 251 points to .881 after 11 years of anonymity. Perhaps it's a comment on human nature that Paciorek, after finding hitter's heaven in the Kingdome, demanded a trade to get bigger bucks with a new team (White Sox). Watch for Paciorek to be the Lynn of 1982, Lynn's decline beginning when he left the friendly confines of Fenway.

Rounding out the five-most-improved list are Bobby Grich (up 171

points), Evans (158) and Leon Durham (131). Most spectacular was Grich, whose .933 TA (eighth in baseball) was hardly a surprise. Grich, the hottest hitter in the game after the strike, led the AL in slugging and tied for the lead in homers.

Each season, the Total Average addict makes a succession of discoveries about players who are better or worse than generally thought. For instance:

■ **JASON THOMPSON**, 27, SEEMED headed for a 400-homer career just five years ago. However, two trades, plus platooning, gave him a lost-in-the-shuffle look. Yet Thompson's TA was .905 in his year in California and .977 last season in Pittsburgh—better marks than he ever had in Detroit. No wonder George Steinbrenner wanted Thompson so badly last year and was

furiously when Bowie Kuhn nixed a trade. Thompson in Yankee Stadium might have been a home-run champ.

■ **THE PHILS'** GARY MATTHEWS QUIETLY built a higher TA than George Foster—.916 to .898. Matthews' 120 runs-produced (runs + RBIs - HRs) also ranked fourth in the majors behind Schmidt (138), Evans (133) and Foster (132).

■ **JOE MORGAN**, EVEN IN HIS DOTAGE, is a crack second baseman. Combine his .810 TA (built on walks, steals and some punch) with his .991 fielding percentage and senile Little Joe is still a star.

■ **DAVE WINFIELD** (.816 TA, 24TH in baseball) is a fine offensive player, on a par with Gorman Thomas, Steve Kemp, Willie Aikens and John Mayberry. His style makes him the game's

highest-paid player. For offensive worth, there's little difference between Winfield and underrated vets like Toby Harrah and Mike Hargrove.

■ **IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR STARS OF** the future, begin with Kirk Gibson (.842) and Henderson, who, despite his showboating, can't be overrated.

■ **EVERYBODY HAS PLAYERS THEY** love to hate. Any All-Fraud Team should be led by shortstop Bill Russell (.447), the worst middle-infielder in baseball, edging out Doug Flynn (.401) and Mario Mendoza (.382), both of whom can field. Other charter members of this All-Inoffensive Team are Garry "The Mighty Burner" Maddox (.548), Mickey Rivers (.621), Enos Cabell (.474), Ken Reitz (.427), Rick Cerone (.487), platinum-gloved Ozzie Smith (.495) and decrepit Carl Yastrzemski (.635), who refuses to retire. These gents are not merely overrated, but are among the worst offensive players at their positions.

■ **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE** best and worst TA players in baseball is staggering. The top TA man, Schmidt, made 255 outs last season. One of the worst, Flynn, made 267 outs. Almost the same, except Flynn was worse. But Schmidt had 317 bases to Flynn's 107—a difference of 210, or more than 52 home runs. And that's in just two-thirds of a season. So, over a full year, the difference between a top player and a bottom one is something on the order of 315 bases—more than 75 homers. Think about that the next time you defend a good-field, no-hit player on the grounds that his offense isn't "that bad."

Let's end with one caveat. Total Average is a basic and interesting evaluation of all a player's skills. However, TA does not give a fair measurement of the value of a player whose job is to do one thing well. For example, the leadoff man whose on-base percentage is high—like Eddie Yost, the walking man of 25 years ago—doesn't have to have power, steal bases or even hit for average. Also, a low-average cleanup hitter who seldom walks or steals but who does have power and a clutch RBI knack—like Armas—slips through the cracks in Total Average.

That, of course, is as any fan would wish it. The spectrum of baseball stats has its interpretive purpose. But, if you have to settle for just one number to judge a player, then start with Total Average. Sometimes it will lead you astray. But not often. ■

THOMAS BOSWELL covers baseball for The Washington Post.

AL LEADERS

CATCHERS

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Jim Sundberg, Tex.	177	255	.694
Carlton Fisk, Chi.	175	260	.673
Rich Gedman, Bost.	99	155	.639
Lance Parrish, Det.	173	282	.613
Rick Dempsey, Balt.	117	203	.576
Ted Simmons, Milw.	169	309	.547
Ernie Whitt, Tor.	83	153	.542
Sal Butera, Minn.	71	135	.526
John Wathan, KC	126	240	.525
Mike Heath, Oak.	121	242	.500

FIRST BASE

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Eddie Murray, Balt.	245	280	.875
Willie Aikens, KC	225	267	.843
Mike Hargrove, Cleve.	199	238	.836
John Mayberry, Tor.	184	226	.814
Cecil Cooper, Milw.	242	303	.799
Rod Carew, Cal.	197	270	.730
Bruce Bochte, Sea.	171	256	.668
Ron Jackson, Minn.-Det.	132	203	.650
Pat Putnam, Tex.	145	224	.647
Bob Watson, NY	84	133	.632

SECOND BASE

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Bobby Grich, Cal.	237	254	.933
Julio Cruz, Sea.	199	274	.726
Tony Bernazard, Chi.	206	289	.713
Lou Whitaker, Det.	171	255	.671
Jerry Remy, Bost.	166	256	.648
Willie Randolph, NY	180	289	.623
Rich Dauer, Balt.	166	278	.597
Rob Wilfong, Minn.	132	235	.562
Frank White, KC	160	285	.561
Jim Gantner, Milw.	151	270	.559

SHORTSTOP

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Roy Smalley, Minn.	105	131	.802
Bill Almon, Chi.	170	254	.669
Robin Yount, Milw.	186	279	.667
Rick Burleson, Cal.	209	318	.657

Alan Trammell, Det.	190	304	.625
Bucky Dent, NY	107	175	.611
U. L. Washington, KC	155	278	.558
Rob Picciolo, Oak.	77	138	.558
Jim Anderson, Sea.	67	138	.486
Alfredo Griffin, Tor.	138	325	.425

THIRD BASE

	BASES	OUTS	TA
George Brett, KC	210	251	.837
Carney Lansford, Bost.	226	281	.804
Toby Harrah, Cleve.	210	262	.802
Buddy Bell, Tex.	202	263	.768
Doug DeCinces, Balt.	199	270	.737
Graig Nettles, NY	187	271	.690
Wayne Gross, Oak.	127	201	.632
John Castino, Minn.	174	287	.606
Butch Hobson, Cal.	127	210	.605
Roy Howell, Milw.	116	192	.604

OUTFIELD

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Dwight Evans, Bost.	304	300	1.013
Rickey Henderson, Oak.	307	317	.968
Tom Paciorek, Sea.	258	293	.881
Chet Lemon, Chi.	212	247	.858
Kirk Gibson, Det.	176	209	.842
Gorman Thomas, Milw.	235	280	.839
Steve Kemp, Det.	236	285	.828
Dave Winfield, NY	235	288	.816
Dwayne Murphy, Oak.	244	302	.808
Ken Singleton, Balt.	219	283	.774

DH*

	BASES	OUTS	TA
Greg Luzinski, Chi.	241	288	.837
Cliff Johnson, Oak.	166	208	.798
Richie Zisk, Sea.	204	256	.797
Terry Crowley, Balt.	80	104	.769
Bobby Murcer, NY	67	89	.753
Reggie Jackson, NY	190	266	.714
Don Baylor, Cal.	213	303	.703
Champ Summers, Det.	82	124	.661
Al Oliver, Tex.	200	308	.649
Hal McRae, KC	193	298	.648

*Includes total at-bats for season, not just those as DH

THE KING AND HIS COURT

Eddie Sutton rules Arkansas with an iron hand, but he just might be the finest coach in the country

BY GENE LYONS

THE GAME LOOKED TO BE A disaster, and the prospects for humiliation high. It would be small consolation that hardly anybody back home would ever know about it. Millions of Chinese would know. If only, Eddie Sutton remembers thinking, there were some way to refuse. But his hosts were firm. The People, you see, had spoken.

For two weeks The People had read and heard about the fine American coaches—Sutton of Arkansas, Bill Foster of Clemson and George Raveling of Washington State. For two weeks last September these wise gentlemen had traveled China under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, Nike and the Peking government. The coaches had put on clinics in Peking, Shanghai and several spots in between. They had eaten wondrous quantities of Chinese food—only the duck feet put him off his feed, Sutton reports—drunk many elaborate toasts and, as a tribute to their importance, occupied the very hotel suites reserved for Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter when they had gone to China. The coaches had been as moved by the masses of





humanity they encountered as all Western visitors seem to be, astonished at the popularity of their sport—concrete outdoor courts everywhere—and somewhat relieved, from a nationalistic point of view, that there are so few tall Chinese. Now The People wanted to see the American coaches play. The Shanghai Sports Palace was sold out.

The Chinese in general may be short, but the Shanghai men's junior team was tall enough. The coaches had seen it play. The Chinese teams play what Sutton calls "brother-in-law ball," having little idea of defense and going in for perimeter shooting with a minimum of physical contact. These were college-aged youths, two or three of whom he thinks could make any college team in America. His Razorbacks would go through them like a revolving door, but they were halfway around the world. The coaches wouldn't even get to practice. Now Sutton, 45, is a jogger and keeps fit. But he had not played fullcourt in 20 years. Nor had Foster or Raveling.

But when the coaches arrived at the arena that night they got a surprise. For reasons Sutton still doesn't understand—a mistranslation perhaps, or maybe the Chinese read the panic on their scrutable Western faces—the opposition turned out to be the Shanghai women's junior team. The coaches and the three Nike shoe salesmen who filled out the squad heaved a collective sigh. As the game progressed, Sutton was to be the key man. Having grown up in the Kansas boondocks, Sutton had spent some time in high school playing center, although he is only 6-1. He posted up on the 6-2 Chinese woman guarding him and the others kept feeding him. He forbade me to write how many points he scored, but only partly out of modesty. He doesn't want any of his players at Arkansas to get ideas. No Razorback player has scored as many points in Sutton's eight years as their coach. Only Sidney Moncrief ever came close, and he just once with 39 points. Sutton made many baskets and 16 out of 17 free throws. The coaches and the shoe salesmen beat the ladies 68-62. Everybody went home happy. He didn't say so, but Sutton had so much fun telling the story I wondered if it hadn't been the happiest night of his athletic career. Eddie Sutton wants to beat you every single time, you see, and he wants you to love him for it, too.

EDDIE SUTTON, WHO SAYS HE WAS a no-account player at Oklahoma

Photograph by Anthony NESTE



A&M (now Oklahoma State), has been a coach—never an assistant—since he talked his way into the head job at Tulsa Central High School just one year out of college in 1958. No Sutton-led team has ever had a losing record. His Tulsa teams won 70 per cent of their games and he was three times city coach of the year in six seasons. At Southern Idaho, a junior college where he began the program from scratch, his three-year record was 83-14. He went 83-50 in five years at Creighton and was 175-46 at Arkansas through mid-January. He is considered by his peers to be one of the finest coaches in the country.

Because Sutton is so direct, and a perfectionist as well, almost all of his players—with the possible exception of Moncrief—go through a period when they wonder whether Sutton likes them or thinks they can play. Assistant coaches spend time reassuring players of Sutton's regard for them. About his style, Sutton is unapologetic.

"Probably, it's the only way somebody with my personality can be. I don't want to say you have to break a young man, but you do have to teach him to be realistic about his ability. Our system spells out clearly defined

roles for each player. Many come to you living in a false world. They think they can hit a shot 50 per cent of the time, but they can't. In practice, you have to show them that they can't."

A Sutton practice can be a draining experience. The players wear shorts with "defense" printed in large white letters across the buttocks; their jerseys read either "discipline" or "dedication." Sutton expects them to work at such matters with fundamentalist zeal. He is all business, and rarely smiles. Often he will simply stop action and walk onto the court, fixing the offending player with a stare. It becomes the athlete's responsibility to explain how he screwed up, and what he should have done instead.

Sutton also makes extensive use of film. Once he spent the better part of an afternoon before an SWC tournament game convincing his players that although they had not lost to Texas Tech for three years and had shot 79 per cent from the floor in their previous meeting, they had played like dogs and had been lucky to win by a point. No feat of psychological manipulation was involved. As he ran the film—stopping, backing up and repeating key plays several times—his players

Darrell Walker: Under control

learned the futility of statistics. Can you shoot almost 8 for 10 and be said to have played badly? Yes—if you do not make sharp cuts and come to the ball when it is passed, if you do not contain dribblers before they penetrate, if you fail to block out on the defensive boards, or go passive against screens and allow unmolested jump shots. Had every shot not gone in, it became clear, the Razorbacks would have been beaten. That night Sutton's team shot only 46 per cent, low for it, but did all the other things so well that Texas Tech was never in the game. Sutton does not believe in luck.

But perhaps the most characteristic example of the Sutton style was the pep talk he gave the same squad before its game against Louisville's famous "Doctors of Dunk" in the 1979 NCAA Midwest Regional semifinals. It was early in the afternoon, the arena was empty except for TV crews laying cable, and his team was jumpy. After letting the players loosen up, Sutton whistled them into a circle.

"If we had to line up and play these guys one-on-one," he said quietly,

"they'd probably kill us. But what I've been telling you all along is that we are a better *team* than they are. If you execute the way you can, we'll win."

The players seemed at first not to want to look at one another: They stared into the middle distance, then finally into each other's eyes. Few looked directly at their coach. His approval, they knew, would depend not upon shouted affirmation but upon what they did that night. The Arkansas win that followed, despite a brief flurry by Louisville in the second half, was more or less routine.

Before a game, Sutton's face tightens and his Kansas drawl grows clipped. He talks less and talks faster, bristling slightly at minor annoyances. He is best avoided, and by game time is visibly pale. Afterward, however, he takes what comes with relative equanimity. His voice still rises with an almost aesthetic zeal when he talks about the Arkansas-Indiana State game that followed two days after that Louisville win. He had issued no such challenge that time. When you have done everything you can to prepare your team, he explains, there is no shame in losing.

If a 6-9 forward is going to beat you

with fallaway 18-foot jumpers—as Larry Bird did that day—then he is going to beat you. For five incandescent minutes at the end of the game, the 6-4 Moncrief had overplayed Bird and denied him the ball. Sutton thinks he might have won had he risked his star's fouling out by putting him on Bird earlier. But it was, he says warmly, "a great college basketball game."

The scary thing about Sutton is that he said almost exactly the same thing five minutes after it was over.

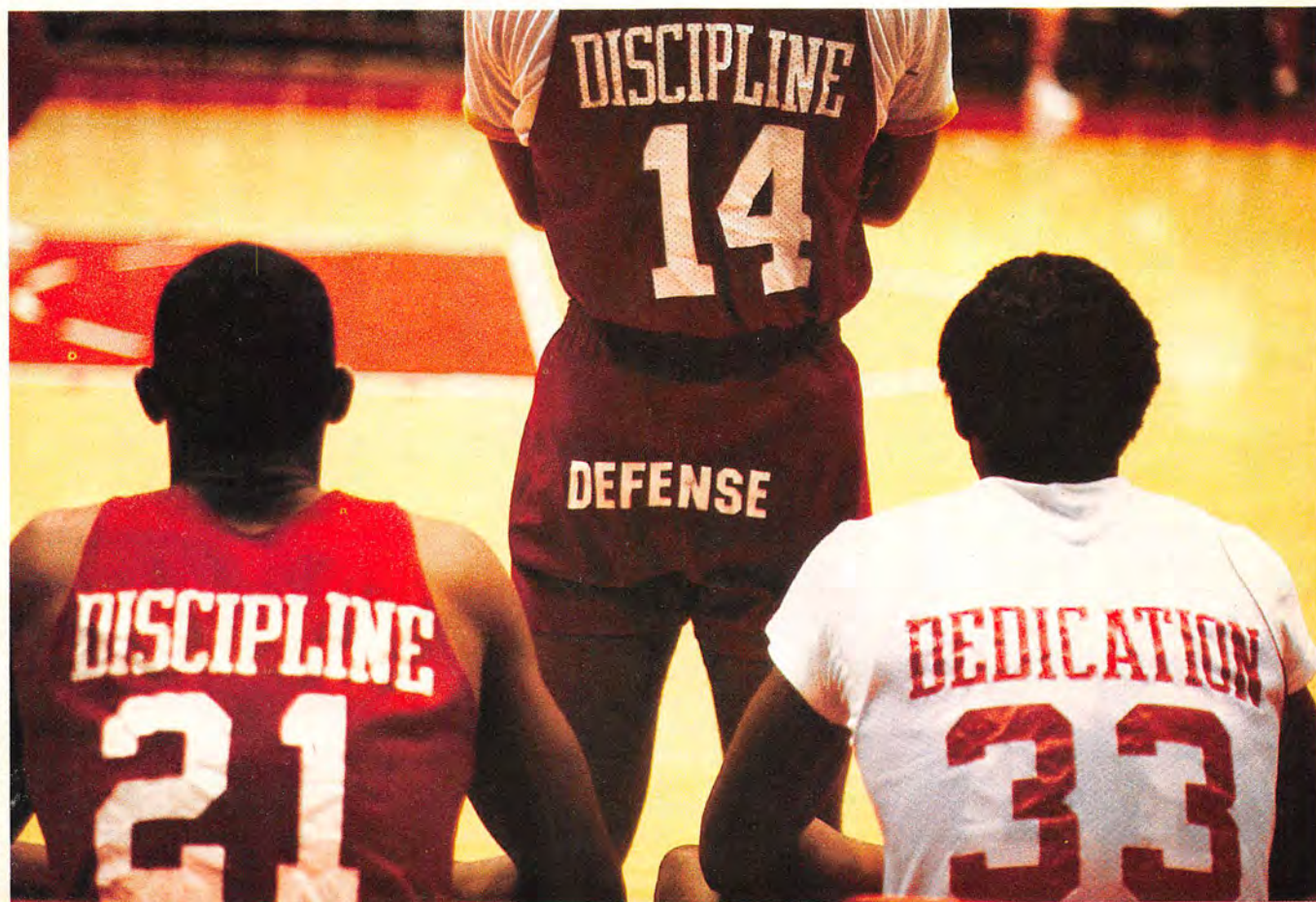
SUTTON'S RIVALRY WITH TEXAS
Abe Lemons is one of the most interesting in college basketball. Partly their "feud" has been overplayed by the newspapers. There is no personal enmity and the men get along as well as any two men sharing the same profession but differing almost entirely in temperament, demeanor and personal philosophy could. Lemons, who is 4-9 against the rival he calls "Fast Eddie," lets on that he thinks Sutton a dandy and a bit too pious in public for his taste. Sutton's pride makes it difficult for him to understand or forget the Texas coach's scabrous wit, especially when it is directed against him. They have known one another ever since

Lemons, then at Oklahoma City, tried to recruit Sutton.

Arkansas has a practice drill in which one player dribbles with his right hand and pushes the defender away ever so lightly with his left. The idea is for the defender to hit the deck as if he's just walked into Gerry Cooney's left hook. They go all the way around the gym like that, then switch roles and do it again. Sutton almost came to blows with Lemons two years ago in Austin after infuriating the Texas coach by chastening one of his players on the court for drawing a cheap charging foul by stepping in front of an Arkansas player who was returning upcourt away from the ball after a Texas basket. "I'll tear that Sunday suit off his back," Lemons told reporters that night. Now Lemons laughs about the incident.

"Eddie and I," he says, "are better friends than everybody thinks we are. He's a lot sounder than I am and he's won everywhere he's been. He's had good players, but a lot of people have good players. But one of my ambitions in life is to have an Arkansas player

Sutton teaches the three D's.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY NESTE

THE COACH WHO TURNED THE SWC AROUND

BACK IN 1974, WHEN EDDIE Sutton first arrived in the Ozarks, Arkansas was the original Backwater State of college basketball. A proper ball, you see, had laces and pointy ends; its function was to fight Communism and foil Satan by almost—but not quite—beating Texas. Round inflated balls were for wimps, blacks and Yankees, few of whom were resident on campus. The superstition was that a decent basketball team somehow sapped the virility of offensive linemen. The total basketball budget in Fayetteville was around \$40,000—less than the football team's long-distance phone bill. Barnhill Arena, where the team played, had a dirt floor, leaks and drafts.

But if Arkansas was Backwater State, the Southwest Conference was the Slough of Despond—almost certainly the worst “major” basketball league in the country. The last players from the league to do anything as pros were Slater Martin and the late Jim Krebs. In 1974 the SWC basketball champion was Texas, with a conference record of 11-3. Outside the league, the Longhorns were 1-12. Arkansas itself was 10-16 that year.

Nobody had noticed the advantages of the Arkansas job except Sutton and his wife Patsy, who had been keeping lists of prime locations since they graduated college together in 1957. Unlike the Texas teams, the Razorbacks have no real in-state competition. Hog worship amounts almost to a civic religion. But the first time he was interviewed for the Arkansas job in 1970, Sutton withdrew his name and never said why. By 1974, though, Frank Broyles was the athletic director, and he was ready to deal. Sutton's Creighton team went 23-6. “When Frank and I finally came to terms,” Sutton jokes, “I told him that next to athletic directors I mistrusted football coaches the most—and he was both.” Besides a good salary, the usual fringe benefits and a decent recruiting bud-

get, the most crucial element in the deal that brought Sutton to Arkansas was power: He became the only SWC basketball coach who was also associate AD in charge of scheduling, promoting and selling tickets for his own team. That's how it's done in the big time, but in the SWC the concept was revolutionary.

Sutton's first two teams went 17-9 and 19-9. But it was one game in January 1976 that got the Texans' attention for good. Houston joined the SWC that year, and it looked like a good deal for the Cougars. Based on history, they looked to have an almost automatic NCAA berth. Coach Guy Lewis had recruited black athletes long before other major colleges in Texas. But the Cougars' first SWC game required a trip to Fayetteville. Whoops! Arkansas, starting two sophs and a freshman, won 92-47. By the end of that season Texas had hired the best coach in that state, Abe Lemons, out of exile at Pan American, and the race was on.

The two sophomores were Marvin Delph and Ron Brewer; the freshman was Sidney Moncrief. All black, all 6-4, all terrific leapers, wonderful shooters and—imagine Sutton's luck here—all from Arkansas. In 1976-77 the Hogs were 26-2, 16-0 in the SWC, and sold out every in-state game. The next year they went 32-4 and beat UCLA and Notre Dame on the way to a third-place NCAA tournament finish. That was also the year Lemons' Texas team won the NIT.

Arkansas has won more than 20 games for five straight years and this year's team has more depth than Sutton has ever had. Over those five years, the Hogs have the most wins (128) in the country, earned an NCAA bid each year, won four SWC titles, twice led the nation in field-goal percentage, stayed among the defensive leaders, and sold every seat months in advance, despite televising almost the entire schedule statewide.

Sutton's rewards for having accomplished all this are considerable. His

salary, fixed by state law at \$1,000 less than the university president's, is in the \$60,000 range. He has a weekly TV show and a daily radio show carried statewide throughout the season, and more well-paid speaking engagements than he could possibly accept. The basketball budget is pushing \$500,000 and showing a profit. Through the agency of some friendly supporters and an initial investment of only \$3,000, Sutton and football coach Lou Holtz each own three per cent of the take in Little Rock's cable TV operation. That alone could make him wealthy in the long run. So secure and happy are he and his family in Fayetteville that he turned down a million-dollar offer from the Dallas Mavericks two seasons ago. “They lost more games in two months than we've lost here in five years,” Sutton says with the air of a man who knows a catbird seat when he's sitting in it.

Despite persistent rumors of a feud between Sutton and Holtz, football and basketball are complementary parts of the athletic empire Broyles has put together. “I don't know who starts these stories,” Holtz says. “Eddie's a quality coach and a great guy. He runs an honest program, he graduates athletes from college, he wins and the program is making money.”

In the past three years Arkansas has had teams ranked in the top 10 not only in football and basketball, but in baseball, track, cross-country, tennis and swimming. The word in the Ozarks is that when Broyles retires as athletic director, Sutton will be the No. 1 candidate if he wants the job. Now, *that's* a turnaround.

So enduring are the regional myths of college basketball, though, that the rest of the country has been slow to recognize the SWC's improvement. They may have to this year. Texas and Arkansas both went through most of their non-conference schedules undefeated, although not against top-flight opposition. But the SWC is more now than the Eddie and Abe show. SWC teams finished December 62-23, including 5-0 against the Big 10. Guy Lewis has lots of talent in Houston, especially Rob Williams. Texas A&M will be better than respectable. Texas Tech handed Arkansas its first loss, while Rice, picked eighth in the SWC in preseason polls, surprised nationally ranked San Francisco and North Carolina State to win the Rainbow Classic in Honolulu. ■ —G. L.

drive the baseline and have all five of my guys fall down. Of course, we'd have to be way ahead to do it, and that ain't likely. But it'd be worth it to see the look on his face."

"HE TREATS EVERYBODY EXACTLY THE same. You just never hear our players saying the kinds of things you hear elsewhere. I've heard him reprimand good friends about race. Last year he told somebody who has done a lot for the program never to say 'nigger' again in his presence."

—former team manager

Randy White, more recently an aide to former Governor Bill Clinton

While Sutton may coach at Arkansas, in personal style he is a Yankee's Yankee. He grew up an only child on a farm some miles from the hamlet of Bucklin, on the open plains of western Kansas. In 1946, when he was 10, Sutton's father settled into a life of lease-land share farming—cattle, wheat and maize. Two-thirds for the farmer, one-third for the landowner. The Suttons did not, for much of his youth, enjoy the benefits of indoor plumbing. What they did have were a basketball hoop nailed to the barn and a radio.

Young Eddie began to dream, although he is much too cautious and dutiful a son ever to put it so boldly, of escape. "My mother had been a good player," Sutton recalls, "and taught me quite a bit. I would shoot for hours every day, playing make-believe games in my head. Then on weekends when we went into Bucklin, I'd get into pickup games. There are a few states where basketball is the No. 1 sport, and Kansas is one of them. At that time Kansas and Kansas State were really good. I can remember lying in bed listening to broadcasts of their games. That's how I learned the importance of a good radio network."

He had his heart set on going to Kansas, Sutton says, except that coach Phog Allen was retiring in a few years. Sutton never has liked uncertainty.

So he went to play for Henry Iba at Oklahoma A&M. He was slow-footed and lacked overall quickness, but he will concede, if pressed, that he could shoot. He enjoys reminiscing about the night in Stillwater in 1957 when Mel Wright hit an 18-footer with five seconds left to nip Wilt Chamberlain's No. 2-ranked Kansas Jayhawks, a night on which, he also remembers, he had hit 9 of 14 from the floor himself. Clearly, Sutton enjoys being famous as a modest man.

Not everybody finds Sutton's per-

sonality charming. Opposing coaches, of course, don't like getting beaten, particularly by a rival who makes a point of letting everyone know how ethical he is. There was much comment in 1976 when Ron Brewer, fresh from Westark Community College in Fort Smith, picked up nine hours of A's in three weeks at the self-same Southern Idaho Junior College where

envy him—probably it is a bit of both.

When his teams lose, the knock on Sutton is that he is "Captain Hook," and ruins talented offensive players by making them fearful to shoot. It is true that his players often glance anxiously at the bench after messing up, and that those who cannot resist putting up off-balance, fadeaway jumpers—the "He'll have to start me if I get 20"



Sidney Moncrief: A Sutton grad

Sutton had coached. Instant eligibility.

Lemons says he would send some of his boys up there, too, but fears one would "stay six weeks, get a PhD and end up ineligible." But the NCAA did investigate and found nothing fishy.

Bigots don't like to be confronted either, especially not in front of an undergraduate team manager, and if any have been converted to tolerance by the Sutton method it probably would be a first. But people who dislike Sutton's manner are not by any means all bigots. Some find him cold, humorless, a bit of a prig where his own interests are involved. Regardless of how often one has been to the well with Sutton, they say, each subsequent trip is like the first. He treats friends and associates as if they were his players. They have to prove themselves again and again. But nobody will say any of these things for attribution. Perhaps they fear Sutton; perhaps they

school of thought—have been known to vanish between seasons.

More than one observer thought Sutton would not be able to handle Darrell Walker, the extraordinarily talented and mercurial guard from Chicago who is one of the key players in the Razorbacks' 11-1 start. "I don't care what he can do with a basketball," one rival coach said. "He'll wreck any team he's on. He's not a bad kid, but he's got no control over his feelings at all." Parts of last season, Walker played out of control. He spent a great deal of time early in the season sitting on the bench with his face in a towel, and was not popular with the other players. But Sutton persevered and Walker has come around, hurting Louisville from the low post during last year's NCAA tournament victory and frequently excelling this season. More than that, Walker is doing well in school, too.

"If Sutton can make Darrell Walker into a productive adult in just a couple of years," says an Arkansas professor,

"then he ought to get the university's outstanding-teacher award, even if he is just a basketball coach."

Despite Sutton's success at Arkansas, Lemons likes to predict that his rival will be moving on any day now. "He'll go someplace with a TV station and a big newspaper. He won't be able to help it." Mostly, though, that is just Lemons' way of slipping the needle to Arkansans, ever touchy about their state's image. He also tells writers that his relative success in Fayetteville—he has beaten the Hogs at home twice in his last three visits—derives from his policy of holding a team vote after the game and making the player who has had the worst game stay there.

For his part, Sutton insists that he plans to stay at Arkansas for good. He just finished remodeling his home, a project that involved moving his family to a motel for several months. A man who will do that would not seem to be suffering from itchy feet.

Last spring Patsy Sutton was ill for a time, and her husband did not take many of the recruiting trips he normally would have made. For a while there, things looked bad on the basketball front. The Razorbacks did not get any of the high school players they wanted most. Then the phone started ringing. Joe Kleine, a 6-11 center, was unhappy at Notre Dame. Would Arkansas be interested? It would. In practice games, Kleine outplayed all-SWC center Scott Hastings, expected to be a first-round NBA pick as a forward. Then a promising 7-0 center, Shaheed Molette, telephoned from Kentucky State. Then Kent State's leading freshman scorer, Robert Kitchen. Then Alvin Robertson, a junior college guard who is doing very well this year as a sixth man. The best high school guard in Arkansas, Willie Cutts, has announced that he wants to play for Sutton. There's a sports-writer's cliché for what Sutton has going here; it's called a dynasty. Coaches rarely leave situations like that.

Winning games, though, is only a small part of the contemporary big time coach's job. Gone are the days of the coach as a sweatshirted rube with a whistle. Today's successful leader has to be part salesman, part celebrity, part public relations man and part teacher. He has to recruit players—in essence to put snow jobs on 18-year-old pituitary cases and their parents—then turn around and be the boss, teaching them the game. He has to handle the press, TV and radio; placate and explain himself to the faculty; deal with state legislators, politic with

his fellows (Sutton is an influential member of the NCAA rules committee); and travel as much as an ambitious rock singer. A coach like Sutton spends more time on the phone than a 13-year-old girl, as much time in airports as gymnasiums, and does the rubber-chicken circuit like a man running for the Senate. Lots of coaches are good at two or three aspects of the job, few excel at all.

Gene Keady and Pat Foster, former Sutton assistants now head coaches at Purdue and Lamar, believe that Sutton is probably the best coach in the country. "There may be better promoters or salesmen," Keady says, "but I doubt there are many better teachers. All-around, he's the best."

Patsy Sutton, who grew up the daughter of a research agronomist in Stillwater when Henry Iba's teams were winning national championships, says she knew from the first time she met her husband what he would do. "Stillwater was a basketball town, like living in Fayetteville today. I had tremendous respect for Mr. Iba. I knew then anybody who played for him and was as smart as Eddie had to know everything about the game, and he had the drive and an intense ambition to coach. Of course, I was in love with him, too, but I never doubted he would be a successful coach."

Besides being drilled in the fundamentals by Iba, Sutton learned "what it takes to win in a dignified manner."

"Dignified" is not a word you hear often in Arkansas. Sutton's players usually leave Fayetteville loving him, but as one loves a father, not a pal. Moncrief, now starring for the Milwaukee Bucks, says, "He taught me confidence, but confidence isn't something given to you. It's like respect. You've got to earn it." The other thing Moncrief got from his coach, he says, was an instinctive knowledge of basketball fundamentals. "At Arkansas, we were taught to key our passes on the position of the defensive man—to keep it away from him. I know it's hard to believe, but probably most guys in the NBA don't do that. You don't have time to think out there, but 75 per cent of the time I'll get it right because I learned it in college."

Equally important is that Sutton's Razorbacks are, as these things go, a class act. Sutton's players go to school; he benches them for missing classes; and tells recruits that if they don't care about graduating, they will be happier elsewhere. All but one of Sutton's Arkansas recruits has graduated.

To hear Sutton tell it, though, he

has serious misgivings about the state of the game. He advises his players that they would be happier doing something else other than coaching. Part of the problem, he says, is TV.

"Everybody who watches a few games on TV thinks he's a coach. Most know just enough to be dangerous. The zeal to win at all costs is worse than ever and fans are not as tolerant of coaches as they once were. Everybody thinks they own a piece of you—you're like a state park. It's getting more difficult to please people."

Sutton also blames gambling. "I don't even want to know what the point spread is. I'm afraid it might influence me unconsciously at the end of a game about whether or not to substitute." I told him that a canny bettor probably could have made a great deal of money over the last several years by betting against Arkansas. As a defensive minded, ball control-oriented team, I thought Arkansas was almost never badly beaten but by the same token allowed mediocre teams to play it closer than a running team with the same talent would have. Wrong again, bettors.

Sutton gave me a long look and then, right there in his office with a picture of his wife and three boys looking down on us from one wall and the triumvirate of Moncrief, Marvin Delph and Brewer posed on the other, he reached into a drawer of his desk and handed me a well-worn copy of "The Gold Sheet," a Los Angeles betting guide. "A fan sent it to me," Sutton said half-apologetically.

There it all was in yellow and black. The man who hates gambling also has the best record in America against the point spread over the six years (1974-75 to 1979-80) that the survey covered. His record against the spread is 86-52. A man could live on that, and a lot of coaches would be happy to have that record straight up. There are other coaches in that vicinity, namely Indiana's Bobby Knight and Missouri's Norm Stewart, but Sutton is the leader.

None of this is to question Sutton's sincerity, only to emphasize that if the score is being kept, Fast Eddie is going to know what it is, precisely how much time is left on the clock, how many timeouts remain to each side, which cards have been played, the exact odds against drawing to a full house and who is bluffing. You can bet on that, too. ■

GENE LYONS, who is a frequent contributor to Harper's and Texas Monthly, lives in Little Rock.

FOUR CHEERS FOR THE NFL



After a close look at all the angles of cheerleading, it's time to present our views on the subject

BY VIC ZIEGEL ♦ PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES DRAKE

"We're not allowed to associate with the players. A few years ago something happened; some of the cheerleaders were dating the players. That wasn't a problem last season because they told us, 'If you go out with a player, you're off the squad.' So the players never came to our parties. That really didn't bother me. Except I would like to know who I'm cheering for."

—SANDY WILKINSON
New England Patriot cheerleader

MAMMAS, THE MAN SHOULD SING, don't let your babies grow up to be Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc. Or Chicago Honey Bears. Or Cincinnati Ben-Gals. Or Houston Derrick Dolls. Mammias, you worry and watch over her from cradle to junior prom and, one day, she comes home and announces, tears of joy ricocheting off her cheekbones, that she's a Kansas City Chiefette. Running around in next to nothing. Staying out three,

four, five nights a week to practice running around in next to nothing. Turning up at shopping-mall openings. Posing. Smiling for photographers who are saying cheese but thinking milk. The money is lousy, mammas. The fame is fleeting. And when it rains, the pom-poms get heavy. Sis-boom-bah and humbug.

Don't misunderstand. For the cheerleaders, it isn't all snowballs and beer cups thrown by peahead or peaheads unknown. Sweet old Uncle Ezra can watch his little niece, the cheerleader, on television. He can turn to his neighbor and say, "See that one? The one on top of the guy's shoulders? That's my little niece. Used to carry her on my shoulders just like that. Of course, I wouldn't do that now. Not in a narrow-minded town like this."

Or maybe her telephone rings. It's a Hollywood producer. He has seen the cheerleader, too. He's making a \$40 million movie, with Redford, Beatty and the toolbox from *Star Wars*. The one thing he doesn't have is a female star. Fonda's too political, Parton needs two dressing rooms and it's the wrong time of year for Lassie. He needs a fresh face: the cheerleader. "Get right out here. First plane. Throw on a raincoat. No, sweetheart, I can't use the guy. That's right, darling, get down off his shoulders."

Okay, big joke. No NFL cheerleader has ever gotten that last call. But INSIDE SPORTS did fly four cheerleaders—New England's Wilkinson, Philadelphia's Linda Panicola, Atlanta's Amy Hardin and Chicago's Teri Serletic—to Bermuda. Part of what happened there can be seen on pages 34-47. The rest of what happened? Nothing. Zip. A hang time of 0.00. This is the bathing suit issue, friend. You want to plant something, buy a seed catalog.

Nineteen of the 28 NFL teams trot out cheerleaders. Among the dropouts are San Diego and Denver; they weren't thrilled when a few of their girls spilled out into the pages of *Playboy*. About the same time, two of Denver's Pony Express girls were arrested for rolling a drunk who turned out to be a decoy cop.

Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and the Jets are the other AFC teams who offer only football. In the NFC, the Giants, New Orleans, Detroit and San Francisco do without. A statistic: Of the nine teams without cheerleaders, four were in the playoffs. That's impressive. On the other hand, what does it really mean?

MY FEET DIDN'T TOUCH THE ground for weeks." Linda Panicola was describing her reaction when she was chosen as a Philadelphia cheerleader, a Liberty Belle. That first year is the best time. "My family taped all the games in case the cheerleaders got on the screen. It used to be such a big deal."

She was a freshman, walking across the campus at West Chester State, when a stranger stopped her. "You're an Eagles' cheerleader, aren't you?"

Linda, surprised, delighted, "How did you know?"

"I had my binoculars on you the whole game."

Right, he exaggerated. He probably cut away from the cheerleaders to watch the kickoffs. Drink a beer. Use the bathroom. But he did say he was watching Linda "the whole game." And here's Linda hoping he didn't catch her making a face or scratching her head. Wishing she was taller, "Because I loved to be in front of the cameras." Her family boasted, "Oh, yeah, Linda was on television." Linda says, "It was a big deal."

Just trying out for the Liberty Belles, when she was still in high school, was big deal enough. She didn't do it for the money. At \$20 a game, nobody does. Her co-captain on the cheerleading squad at Cherry Hill West High School had come up with the idea.

Linda began taking dancing lessons—tap, ballet, jazz—when she was five years old. Made the Cherry Hill West cheerleading squad as a freshman. "A real ham," she calls herself. But her friend, the co-captain, was the star. They were in school plays together, student government, pageants. Her friend was homecoming queen, Linda first runnerup. "We always danced together," Linda says. "She was absolutely beautiful and I was always her sidekick."

Linda thinks there were almost 1,000 girls at the Liberty Belle tryout. "A cattle call," she says. The two friends danced and were told to stay for the next round. Half the girls were sent home. There were two more rounds, more dancing, and each time the number of applicants was cut in half. They were sitting in the stands at Veterans Stadium, each with a number, and someone was announcing the numbers of the 40 who would become Liberty Belles. Her friend's number, lower than Linda's, wasn't called. They did call Linda's. "It was the first time I ever got something over her. We sort of had a fight over that. We've

talked since, but things have never been the same."

Her first year as a cheerleader, the Eagles and Linda went to the Super Bowl. But somebody forgot to treat them like three-point favorites. "The Oakland cheerleaders had a big dressing room and we had a tiny room. One plug for everybody's curling iron. When we met the Oakland cheerleaders we were all prepared to say how horrible they were—I still say I hate Oakland—but they were real nice." After the game, after the Eagles were beaten, it was time to return to the tiny room next to the big room. "We could hear how happy they were. It was awkward." But, mostly, it was fun. Four days in New Orleans. Surely you saw the headlines: Cheerleaders Have a Drink on Bourbon Street. And where would you rather be, Philadelphia or New Orleans? Take your time.

The second year was different. So were the Eagles. Bounced out of the playoffs before Dick Vermeil could find his dental floss. Linda enjoyed being with her new friends—the cheerleaders who replaced her old friends, last year's cheerleaders. But she began noticing something. "After rehearsals, you're so tired, so beat, your hamstrings hurt. I couldn't imagine doing it every day. It's tough to get psyched up to keep cheering. You can't cheer forever."

This year, there were more people stopping her on campus. But there was no Super Bowl team. And so the questions usually went like this: "Why did you lose?"

Linda, surprised, congenial, "I didn't call the right plays."

They wouldn't take ho-ho-ho for an answer. They really wanted to know. Why did you lose? "Hey, when we won, I never got the credit. Why should I take the blame when we lose? They knocked on my dormitory door at 3 a.m. 'Does that cheerleader live here?' I was asleep; I didn't have my game face on. I got tired of that. My only claim to fame, my only worth was as a Philadelphia cheerleader. When I got recognized, it was, 'There's that cheerleader,' or 'That cheerleader lives in my dorm.' It was always 'That cheerleader.' I used to love it. But now it bothers me. It's not such a big deal anymore."

Linda is handing in her pom-poms. "This was my last year. College gets too heavy for me. If I want to go to medical school I can't be thinking of dance routines when I should be thinking of carbons and hydrogens."

Another of our models, Chicago

Honey Bear Teri Serletic, is retiring after three years, turning her back on the expense money of \$10 a game. "It's a lot of fun, but you can get caught up in it. I want to use it as something to further my singing career. Use it to my advantage."

The truth is, cheerleading for NFL teams has not been a strong line on the resumé. A few years ago, an L.A. producer put together a TV pilot that featured a dozen Ram cheerleaders. All had taken dancing lessons, he recalled, and a few were beauty-contest winners. Some were in acting class, he said, "but about the only time they were coherent was when they had a baton in their hands."

"NOBODY CARED ABOUT CHEERLEADERS until Dallas. They became the second game of every CBS doubleheader and you had a lot of navel shots. But if they didn't have a good team, who do you think would care about their cheerleaders?"

—A NEW YORK JET OFFICIAL

IS THERE LIFE AFTER cheerleading? "Not one of our girls is in show business, not that I know of," says Debbie Bond, assistant to the director of the Cowboys' cheerleaders. "If she says she wants to become a movie star, she's not going to be a Dallas cheerleader. That's it. She's in for a big surprise. She doesn't understand that the only reason for our existence is the Dallas Cowboys."

Here's a peek into the future for the girls who do understand. "They get married," Bond says, "or go further in their careers." Like VonCiel Baker, a Dallas cheerleader for eight years. A legend in tight, short pants. VonCiel quit. Went out on top. Didn't audition for '81. Now she's the president of a skin-care company.

Tina Jimenez was a Cowboy cheerleader during the 1976 season, earning the usual \$14.12 a game, after taxes. "I was real happy about making the squad. Never thinking that it would change my life. But it actually did."

She tried for a second season but failed the test. "Afterward I called Suzanne Mitchell [vice-president and director of Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc.] and I asked her, 'Give me a reason why I didn't make it.' She said, 'Your number didn't come up.' I said, 'Was there something wrong? Could I fix it and try out again next year?' I just wanted to feel better about myself. And she said, 'Honey, your number just didn't come up.' She said that a couple of times."

Tina had been a hairdresser when she first tried out, and then a bookkeeper for a fried-chicken franchise. She delighted in being recognized. "It really amazed me because everybody knew who I was. I was on camera all the time, seemed like. Maybe it was because I was the only one with dark hair and brown eyes. But I don't think that had anything to do with my getting a better job."

"I knew I had the brains to do more than be a cheerleader and a hairdresser. I was lying in bed one night and the idea just came to me to open my own business. And to call all the girls I had been cheerleaders with. I knew a lot of them had taken it real hard when they didn't make it. I saw them crying and carrying on something terrible. This was a way of keeping us all together."

On a \$2,000 bank loan, she opened a promotional and talent agency. If the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc. were No. 1, Tina hoped someday to be Avis with her Texas Cowgirls Inc. "I called Suzanne Mitchell and told her what I was going to do and she wished me good luck. She told me I sounded like a real responsible person and she thought I would do real good. We just left it at that. About two or three months later I heard that their contracts for the new girls stated they could not be in competition with the Cowboy cheerleaders for a period of five years."

Say an electrical convention wants a few scantily clad young women to turn up the thermostats. They can call the Cowboys and hire cheerleaders, minimum of two, at \$500 each, to come around and pose for photos, sign autographs. Thank-you and goodbye. "We reject more than we accept," says Debbie Bond. "If somebody calls us and there's something about the tone of his voice that makes us uneasy, then we'll reject him."

There are strict rules: No alcohol can be served wherever the Dallas cheerleaders make an appearance. Hotel accommodations must be above the first floor. A security precaution, Bond explains. "When our girls travel and are met at an airport we must have the license number of the vehicle, the name, address and telephone number of the driver. People don't understand why we go to such lengths. I tell them, 'Hey, have you ever had children?' The girls represent more than themselves. They represent the Dallas Cowboy football team, the city of Dallas, the State of Texas, our homes and our families."

Tina's Texas Cowgirls will appear

for \$350 a day. A bargain. Margaritas are allowed.

"We do not approve of that organization," says Bond. "Sometimes they say they are us, and they are not us."

"I did not create my business to have problems with the Cowboys," Jimenez insists. "Never did I think that they would be upset. The new girls that we get say they talk real bad about us."

Tina used to drive a "beat-up old Ford." Now there's a Corvette in the driveway of her three-bedroom home. When she was doing hair, and cheering, she lived in an apartment. "Something tells me I'm bettering myself. It's been hard but I didn't expect someone to hand it to me. I don't want to sound bitter about the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders. I feel good that I was a Cowboy cheerleader. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am today."

She was watching a Bob Hope television show and Bob Lilly was introduced "as a former Dallas Cowboy." She keeps reading about former President Ford. "Why can't a former somebody do something else?" she asks. Here she is, a former Cowboy cheerleader, and Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc. considers her the enemy.

"I get a lot of calls here for the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders," Tina says. "I give them the right number all the time. I'm just as nice as I can be."

CHEERLEADERS MOVE ON, AT least a third of each year's squad changing up its dancing shoes. Our Honey Bear, Teri Serletic, and Liberty Belle, Linda Panicola, will step aside for 1982 rookies. But Atlanta's Amy Hardin intends to return and New England's Sandy Wilkinson says, "I think I'll try out again. I don't want to quit when the team's doing so bad." The NFL draft has never been as important. ■

VIC ZIEGEL is a contributing editor for New York magazine.

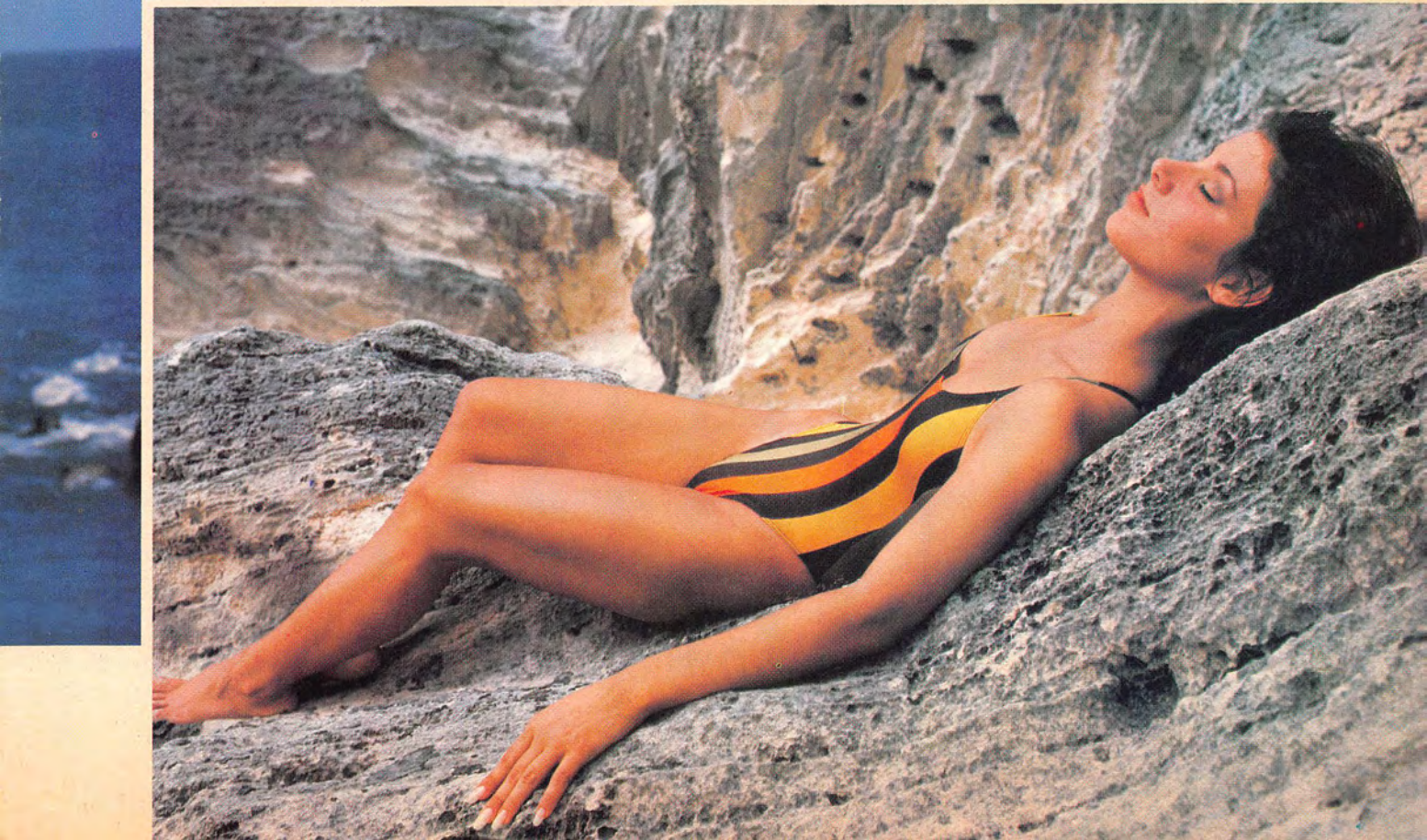
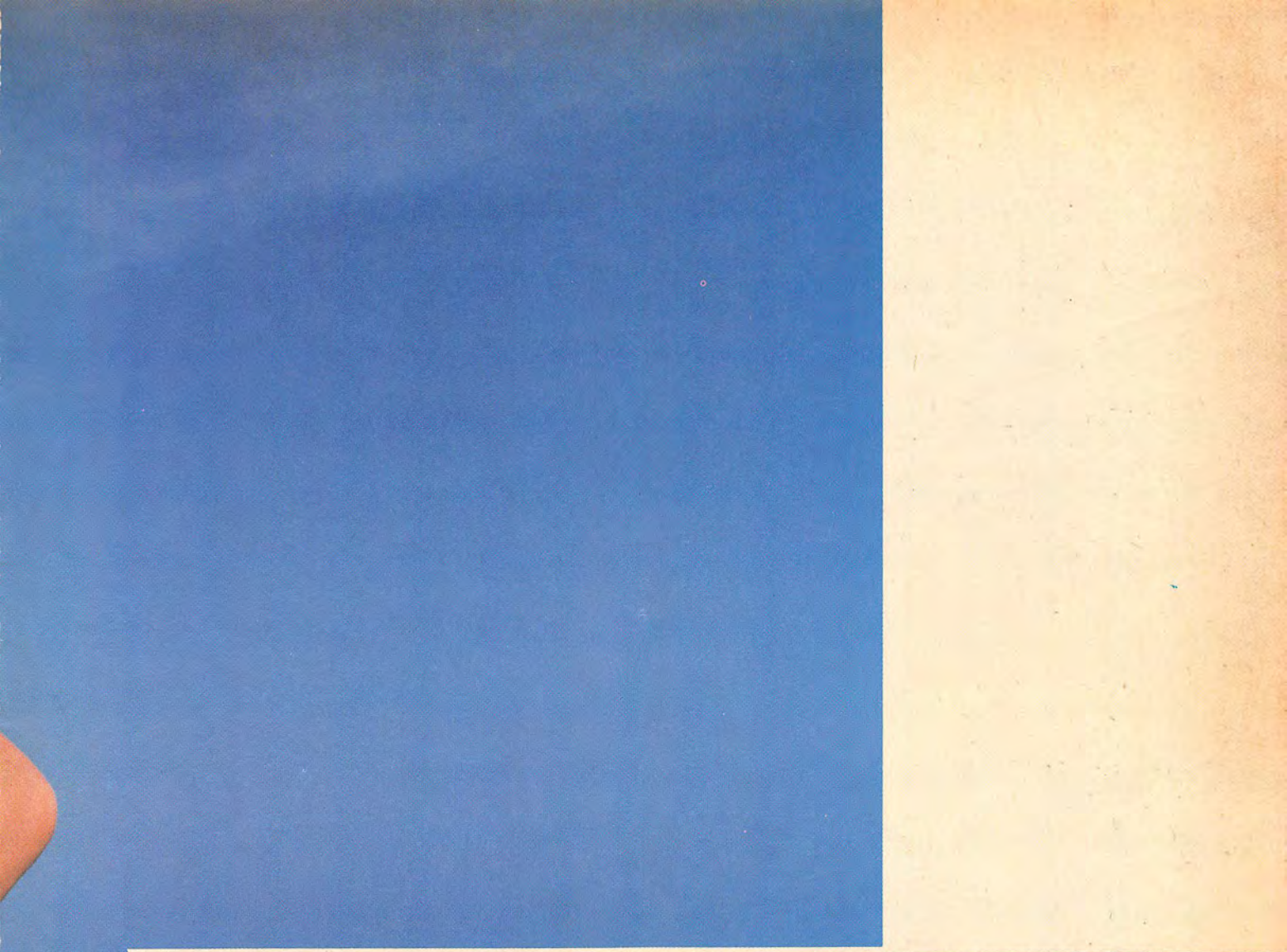
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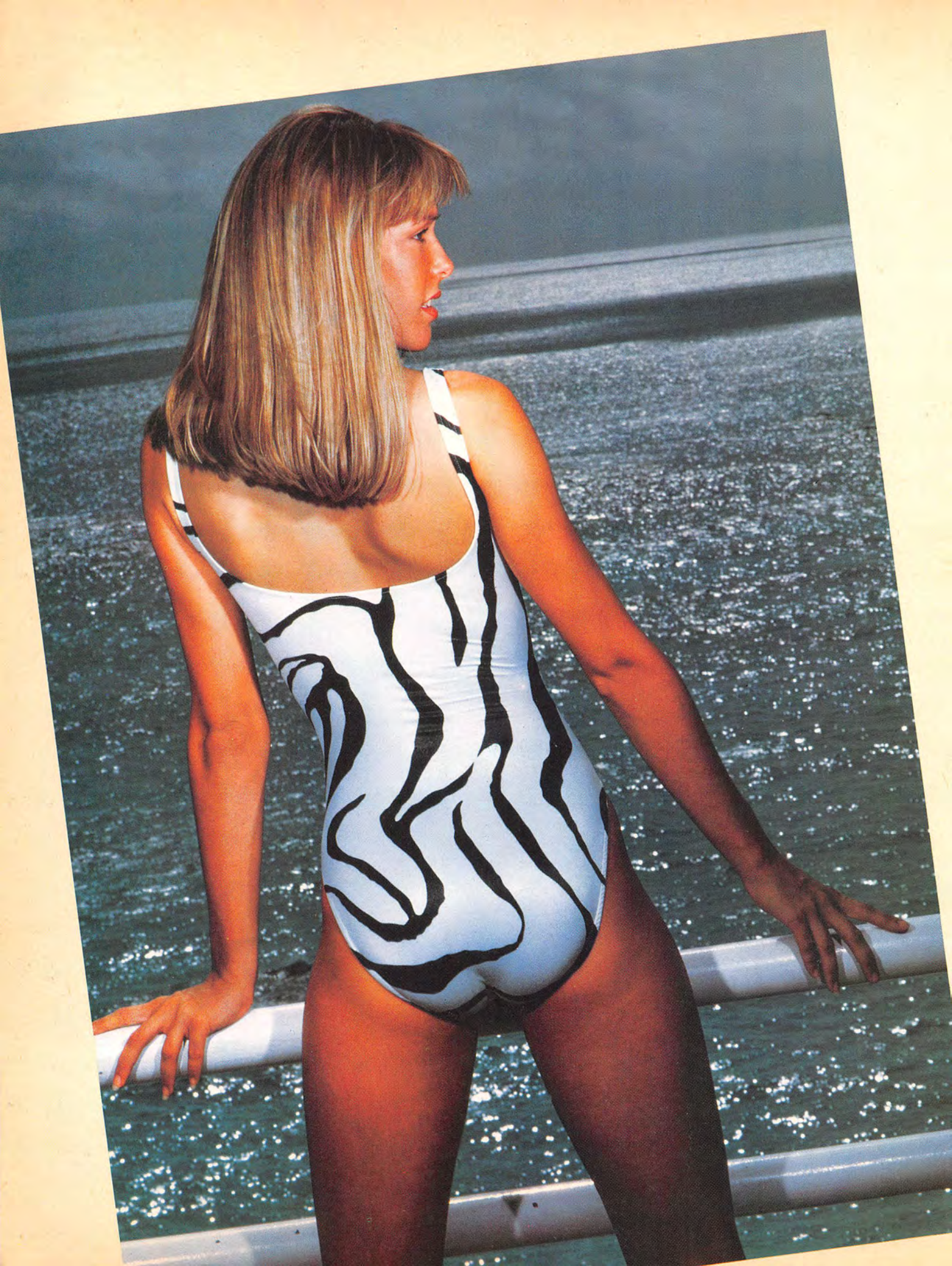
COVER: V-neck, Elon of California, \$55; Page 34: maillot, Connie Banko, \$46; Page 35: pirate stripe, Liza Bruce, \$46; Page 36: zebra maillot, Norma Kamali, \$55; Page 37: one-shoulder, Norma Kamali, \$55; Pages 38-39: two-piece, Norma Kamali, \$35; blue maillot, Gottex, \$54; ruffled bikini, Liza Bruce, \$44; Pages 40-41: tank suit, High Tide, \$30; two-tone maillot, Liza Bruce, \$48; striped ballet suit, Norma Kamali, \$85; Pages 42-43: carnival stripe, St. Raphael, \$46; halter maillot, Norma Kamali, \$65; Page 44: bandeau, Liza Bruce, \$78; Page 45: V-neck plunge, Connie Banko, \$40; Pages 46-47: bikini, Ariel for Haye, \$50; barber stripe, Liza Bruce, \$54; red maillot, Elon of California, \$49.

Hair and makeup: ELAINE KASMER. Stylist: MARTHA PASCO BAKER.



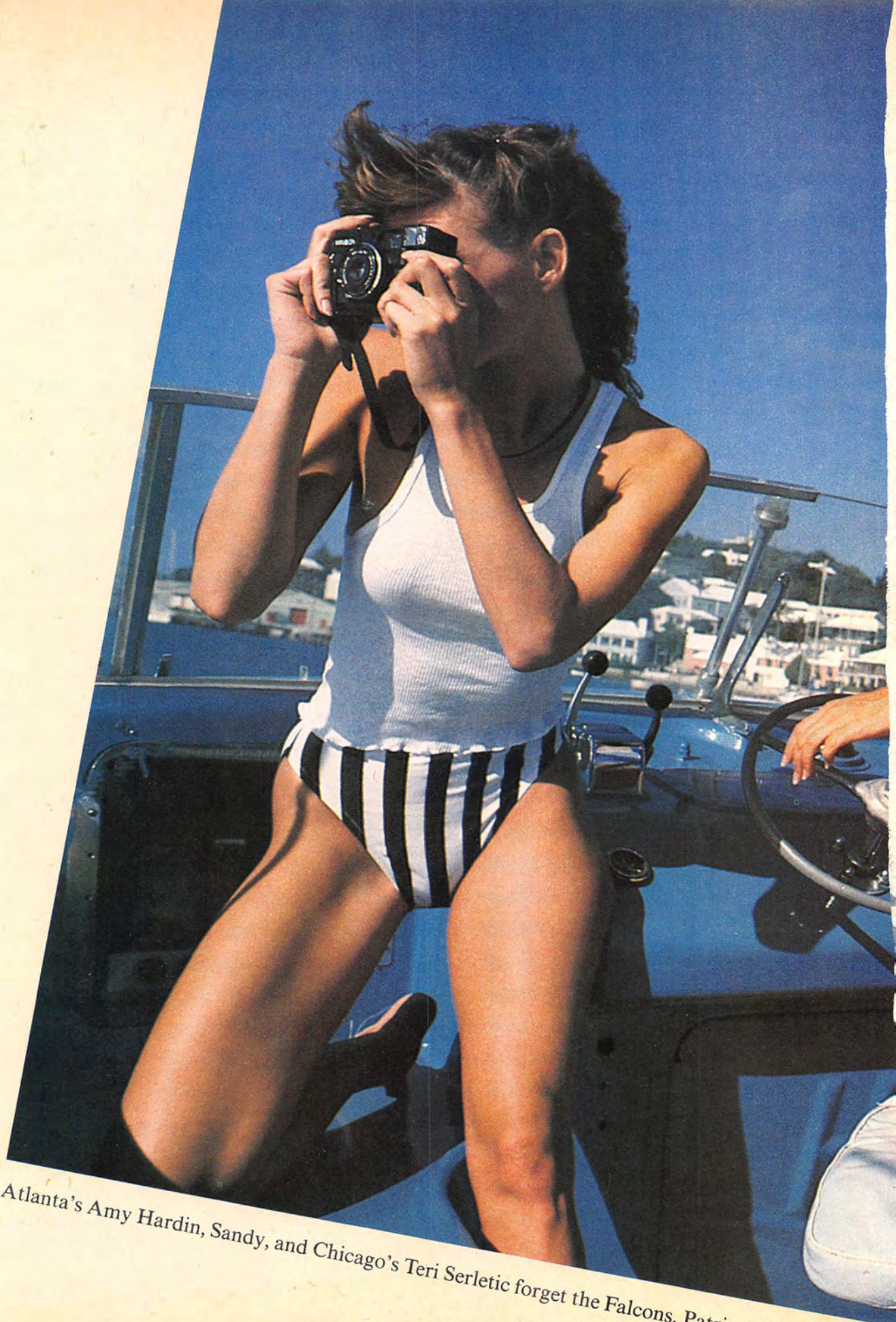
After a grueling 16-game schedule, cheerleaders Sandy Wilkinson of the Patriot Spirits (above) and Linda Panicola of the Philadelphia Liberty Belles run to sunlight in Bermuda.







Sandy and Linda trade the roar of the crowd for the solitude of the beach.



Atlanta's Amy Hardin, Sandy, and Chicago's Teri Serletic forget the Falcons, Patriots and Bears.







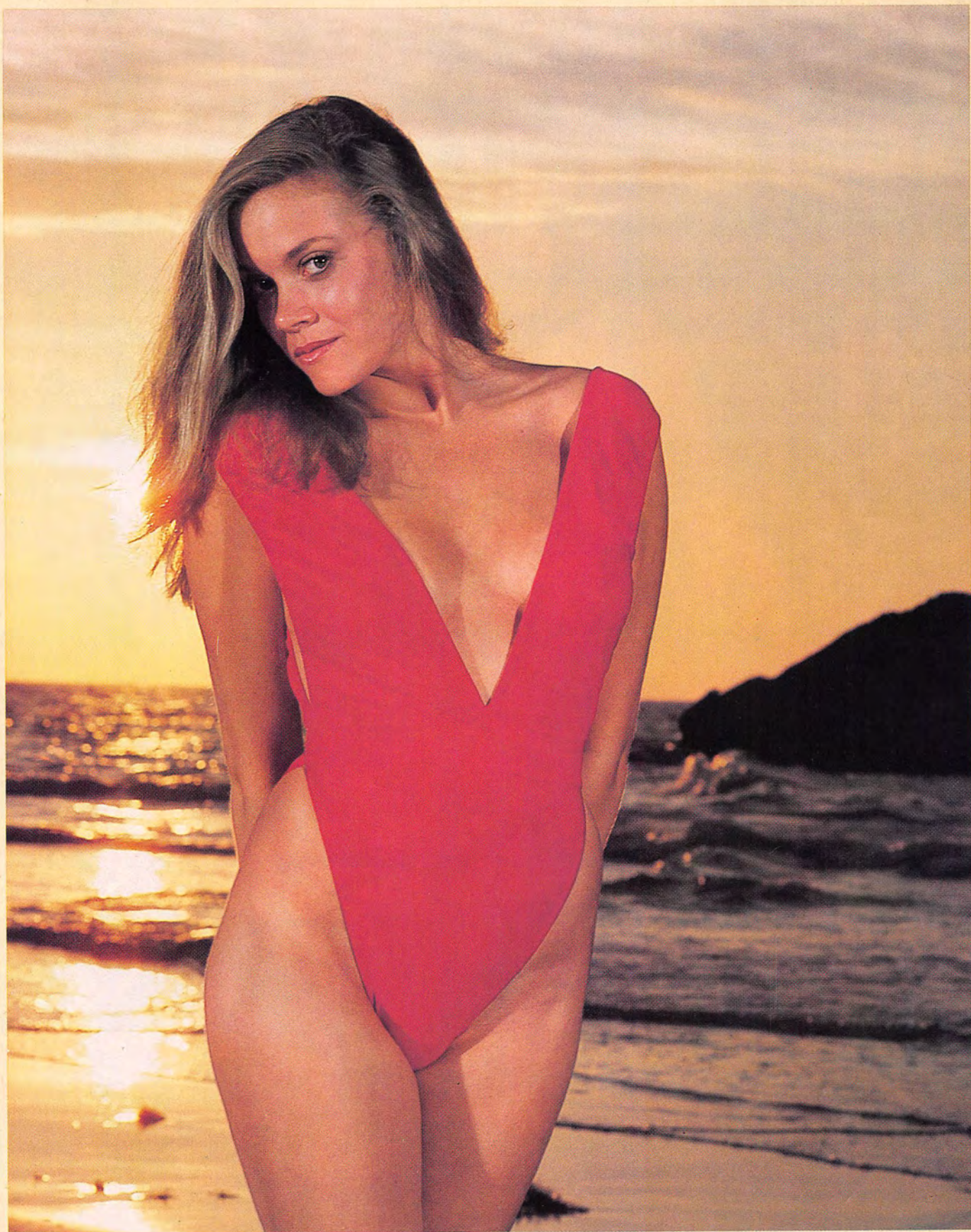
Linda dreams of life after cheerleading; Amy and Sandy plan to return to the sidelines.



Sandy and Teri tame these horses, but their teams couldn't handle the Cowboys.







Amy stars at sunrise; Teri shines at sunset.



Amy sets sail; Teri and Sandy head for the end zone.



SOUL ON ICE

Meet George Gervin, San Antonio's double-pumping Iceman. He is the third most potent offensive force ever to play in the NBA. He makes \$800,000 a year. He's not happy.

BY JUAN WILLIAMS

THE TALL, SKINNY GUY WITH the knee-length sweatsocks has been pumping them in from ungodly distances all night long, and you begin to wonder why the defense doesn't lean on him a little. Jumpers from the top of the key and the deep corners, 20-foot bank shots—à la Sam Jones—high off the glass. Uh-huh, the guy's good, almost unconscious, but at 6-8 and only 183 pounds, with a 31-inch waist and pipe-cleaner legs, he appears to be vulnerable to a dose of muscle.

A teammate grabs a defensive rebound and fires a quick outlet pass to midcourt, and suddenly you understand the scope of the problem. The skinny guy swoops toward the basket, but there's this hulk from the other team applying some subtle pressure to his back. The skinny guy is ridden past the basket, seemingly headed for the second row of seats behind the backboard, but then, twisting the upper half of his body back past the defensive player, he reaches under the backboard and over the hulk's shoulder—and dunks the ball. With both hands. "Ooooooh, Iceman," the crowd moans.

The skinny guy, George Gervin of the San Antonio Spurs, aka The Iceman or just plain Ice, turns and lopes back on defense, his face bland and empty of emotion.

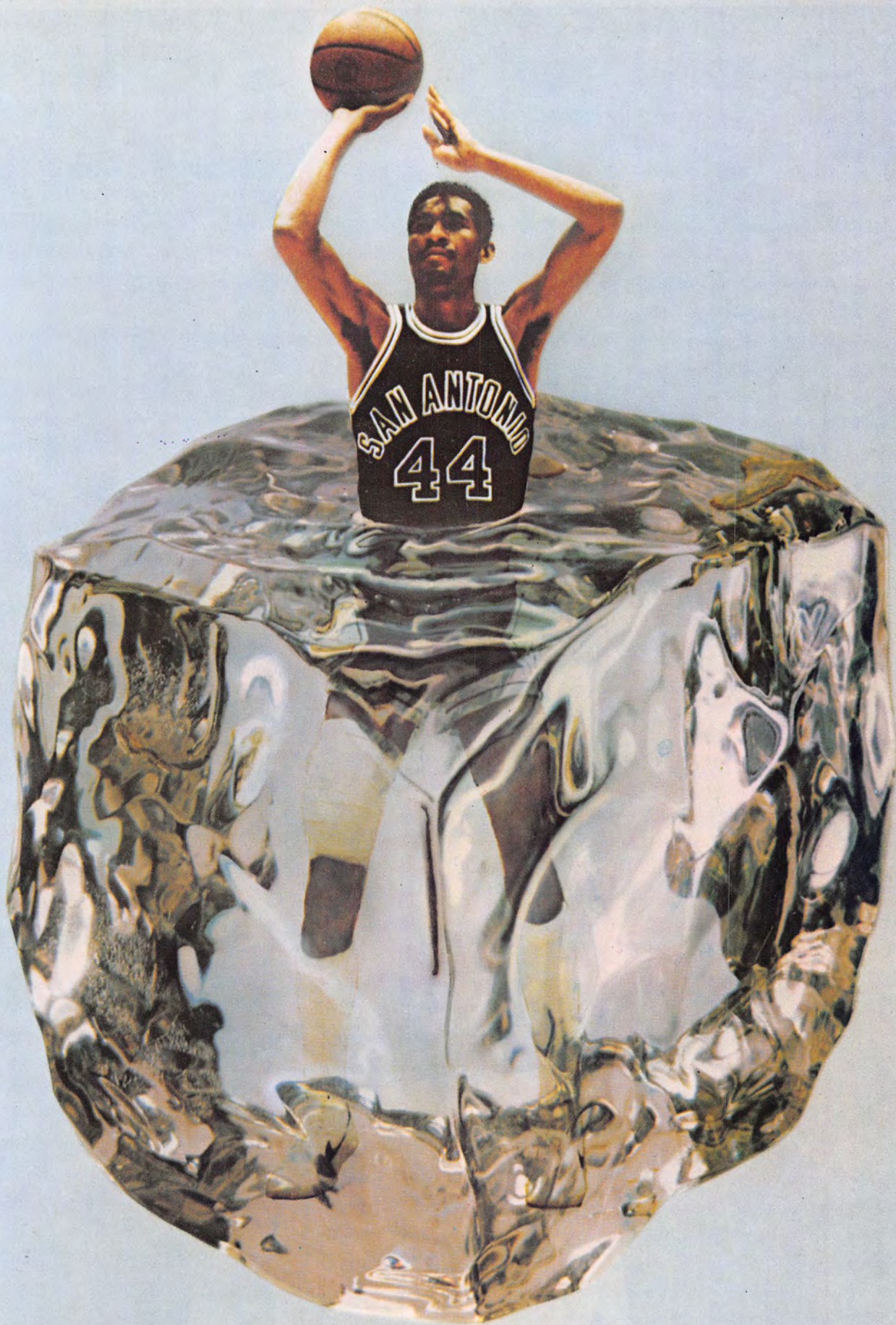
"There are things I can't do with a basketball," he says, matter-of-factly. "I can't dunk two balls at one time."

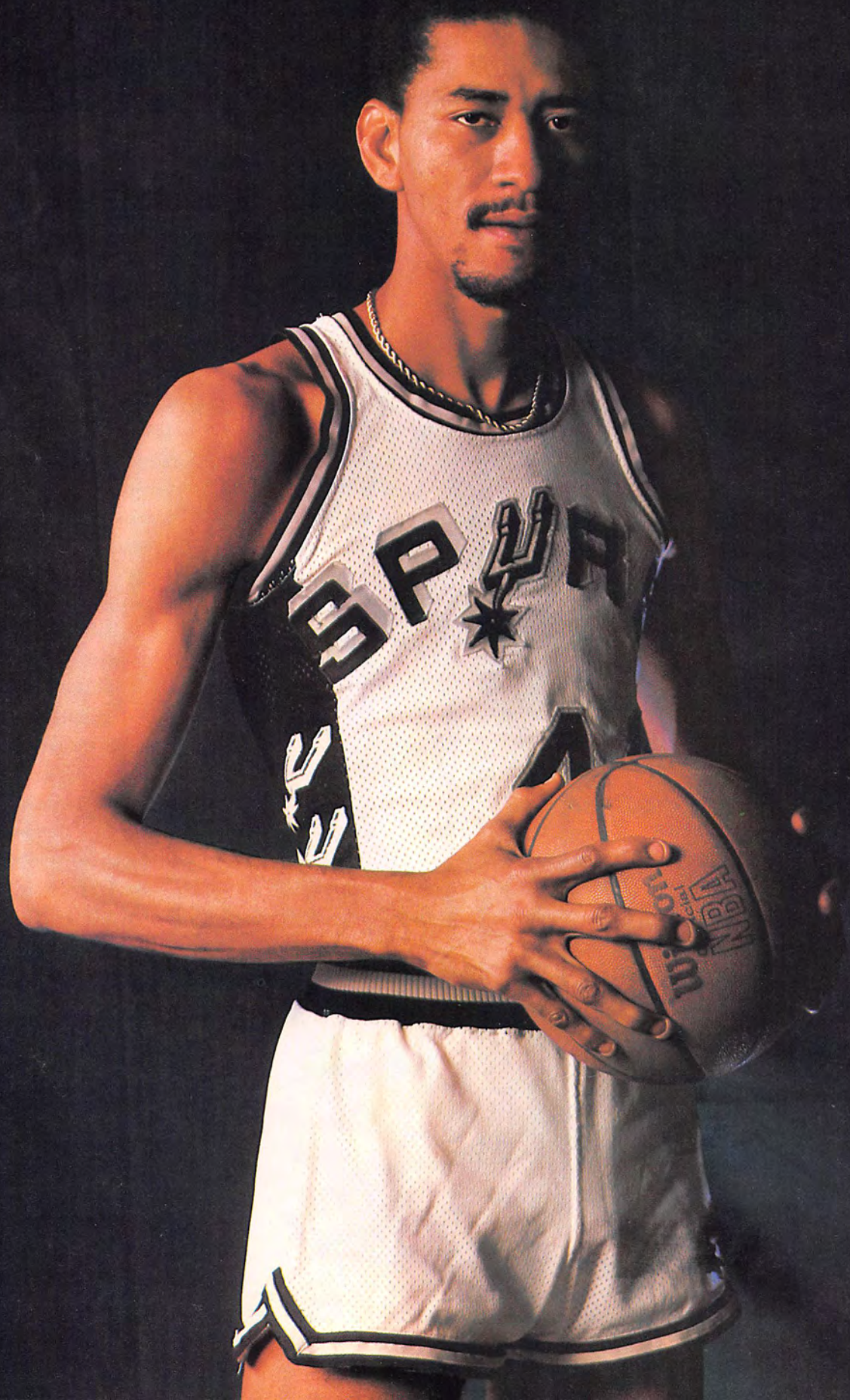
Well, yes. Take, for example, the last day of the 1977-78 season. Gervin had been battling Denver's David Thompson for the scoring title, and seemed to have it wrapped up until Thompson tossed in 73 points on the last afternoon of the regular season. Gervin took the court against New Orleans that night, knowing he needed 58 points to win the battle. With 5:05 left in the third quarter, he hit his 59th point, on his way to 63 for the game. During most of the fourth quarter, he rested.

For the fans, there is no one like Ice, who led all NBA players in votes for the 1980 All-Star Game, the only player ever to get more than 400,000 votes in one year. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is more dominating, but he can't move or shoot like Ice. Larry Bird is a hustling, teeth-gritting team player; Gervin's art is executed with an ease that implies genius. Julius Erving, once a teammate of Gervin on the Virginia Squires of the old ABA, is stronger inside, a better dunker. But he can't touch the variety or accuracy of Gervin's long-range weaponry.

True, the Doctor *is* a legend. But Gervin is a basketball landmark. In the same sense that Bill Russell's defensive play changed the game, Gervin's play at guard has changed the game. Suddenly, a 6-8 guard in the NBA is not unusual; he is preferred. In addition to changing the concept of the position—he was switched from forward during his second season with San Antonio when guard Donnie

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL GEIGER (ICE CUBE); ROBERT HAGEDOHN (GERVIN)





Freeman was injured during the playoffs—he is the only guard ever to win three straight scoring titles. His 28-points-per-game career average going into this season makes him the third most potent offensive force in the history of the league. His .527 shooting percentage is the ninth best ever. And it has been more than three years—255 straight games as of January 12—since he has failed to score in double figures.

For these and other accomplishments, George Gervin makes about \$800,000 a year—\$600,000 in base salary and a sliding bonus of \$5,000–40,000 for every Spur win over 34, up to 56. But he's not happy, 'cause money can't buy him love. Or respect.

THE SUNKEN LIVING ROOM IN George Gervin's spacious San Antonio home is dominated by a large, gold-leaf painting of the Iceman coming downcourt with the ball. He appears to be beginning a move. There are no defensive players, no teammates in the picture. His critics would say this is an accurate picture of how George Gervin plays the game.

Gervin's problem, at least in the eyes of some beholders, is: At the highest levels of pro basketball, he's never been a champion.

It heats him up that some see him as a loser. George Gervin does not want to end up like Pete Maravich, another great solo artist who was only a blip on the pro basketball screen, because his teams never won anything. Nor did the teams of Connie Hawkins, Gervin's childhood hero—unless one counts an ABA title with the Pittsburgh Pipers in 1967–68. Nor the teams of the great Oscar Robertson until he latched onto a young Kareem when his own career was all but over.

Gervin wants to be a champion in his prime. This, he hopes, will shut up the nay-sayers.

"I don't know why people accuse me of being a loser," Gervin says, opening a small door to his feelings. "I score all those points—and without taking too many shots—because I'm talented and gifted and consistent." And then, as if sensing the threat to his Iceman image, he slams the door with, "Anyway, everyone can't be a champion."

What is George Gervin really like? Cool? Aloof? Hot? Troubled? Happy? Soulful? And why are they saying

those terrible things about him?

COOL

WHEN GERVIN FIRST CAME TO SAN Antonio, fearing he would be perceived as inarticulate, he answered some reporters' questions with cosmic one-liners. For example:

"George, why did you opt for that 25-foot fallaway jumper from the corner instead of passing to the open man underneath?"

"The world is round."

Well, it was strange and definitely cool, even if it didn't make him too many friends. Not that he minds. He will jive with friends, if things don't get too heavy, but better to be sitting alone on his boat in the Gulf, a fishing pole in hand. And if no fish show up to upset the equilibrium of a quiet day, better yet. His favorite group is the Crusaders, light, jazzy music. He is not into flashy clothes or jewelry, favoring instead T-shirts and loose-fitting, open-neck cotton Mexican shirts. He's just living the life.

ALOOF

ALTHOUGH HE RELUCTANTLY agreed to be team captain of the Spurs this year, he still comes late to practice. Another contradiction: Though he claims to want to win a championship, he won't take a leadership role.

On a rainy December morning in Washington, D.C., earlier this season, Ice eased out of a hotel elevator just in time to make the bus taking the Spurs to a morning practice at George Washington University. "Ain't used to getting up so early," said Gervin, who sleeps 10–12 hours a night and two hours most afternoons. He wore an old, long, gray tweed overcoat, sweatpants and sneakers, an outfit that would not look out of place on any street corner in any inner city in America. At practice, he stood off to the side as his teammates joked around. At first, he just seemed shy, but ultimately he made it clear that he just doesn't care enough to make an impression. A Washington reporter asked if the 47 points he had scored in his first game back after an early-season injury were the result of any special effort, perhaps intended to send a message to Ron Brewer, who had averaged 41 points for three games as Gervin's replacement.

"Were you trying especially hard that night, Ice?" the reporter asked.

"Just the way the Lord planned it," Gervin answered.

HOT

GEORGE GERVIN CAN'T UNDERSTAND why people keep bugging him about never having won it all, when it's management that keeps trading away the players he knew, the players he is sure he would have won a title with by now. It's the guys who are gone—James Silas, Larry Kenon, Billy Paultz, even Doug Moe, the coach who lives by the run-and-gun offense—who explain the absence of a championship ring, not the ones who were left behind.

So what if fans and general managers alike say Kenon is a hot dog and Silas had bad knees and Paultz is slow and awkward. In Gervin's mind, that team was never appreciated. Just like he has never been appreciated. This is the team Ice dreams of having back together in much the way a poor kid in Detroit growing up without a father might pray every night that his daddy will come home and the family will be all together again.

Around the league, GMs and coaches try not to laugh when asked about Gervin's discontent with the Spurs and his desire to keep the likes of Kenon on his team. The consensus is that Gervin needs an excuse. To say the least, San Antonio executives disagree with Gervin's view of their trades and the hiring of Stan Albeck, more a disciple of patterned play than his predecessor, Moe. They disregard Gervin's displeasure, calling it the natural reluctance of players to accept change—even for the better.

"The only asset a team has is its players," says Bob Bass, the GM who had a hand in the trades and firings. "If three or four guys retire on you, that's devastating. That's one-fourth of your assets out the door. We saw we were getting old and we changed it. We know the players don't like it. A lot of guys we had on this team grew up together."

"You can't say what we've been doing isn't successful. We've been in the NBA five years and we're the only team in that time to win three divisional championships. We've got the fourth-best won-lost record since we've been in the league. We're one of only four teams to make the playoffs

every year for the past five years."

"Last year we won 52 games," says Angelo Drossos, the president of the Spurs. "That was after we moved Paultz and Kenon. The year before, we won 41."

Bass and Drossos have continued to move bodies this year. Early in the season, they got Mike Bratz from Cleveland to help fill the void left by Silas—17.7 points and 3.8 assists per game last year—in the backcourt. Late in December, the Spurs liberated all-star forward Mike Mitchell and guard Roger Phegley from the Cavaliers, sending forward Reggie Johnson and Brewer to Cleveland in exchange.

Gervin's reaction is succinct. "How are we supposed to win a championship when they keep moving people in and out of here? It takes time for a team to get together."

Sometimes, Gervin seems a little confused about what he wants and where he can find it. "I'm not sure they want to win here," he will say, shaking his head as the south Texas sky turns to evening with burnt orange exploding beyond his patio. "I don't want to go nowhere. But if you have to..."

Sometimes, despite all he means to the team, he worries that the Spurs may force him to leave. "They tried to trade him when we renegotiated his contract in 1980," says Pat Healy, Gervin's agent. "It was George for Gus Williams or Dennis Johnson and one other, like maybe Lonnie Shelton. We're talking George Gervin, basketball talent, one of the greatest players of all time. And they were looking to trade him."

Says Drossos, "If he played in New York or Los Angeles, he could do no wrong. He could walk on water." But, as Healy points out, Drossos was looking to trade him for a pair of mortals. So who knows what that means?

One thing Gervin claims to like very much about San Antonio is the paucity of fast-lane action, even if it means no endorsements, no magazine covers and little TV coverage. "Out here, I'll last longer. I'll keep my family. Up there, they'd do nothing but take away my money. New York is Satan's place. The same with Los Angeles. Sodom and Gomorrah. Look at Hollywood. It's all foretold. There's only one way for those places to go. To Hell. How long you survive is a matter of how strong your faith is. Mine is in Jehovah. God Almighty. The truth is Jehovah."

Ice doesn't much care for life in Detroit, either. He can get pretty hot

about growing up without a father—he was fatherless from the age of three—about women who "don't understand that sex is about making children."

He leans forward, his face knotted with intensity. "Someone has got to take care of the children." This is something George Gervin feels strongly about.

TROUBLED

BOOKER GERVIN SR. LEFT HIS WIFE and six children alone in Detroit's Eastside ghetto when George was only three. Geraldine Gervin worked hard to keep the kids fed and clothed, but they were still occasionally dependent on charity to get by. To this day, George does not like to talk about it because it embarrasses his mother, whom George has moved—along with an older sister, Barbara, and younger brother, Derrick—to San Antonio to live with him.

With his father gone, George grew up trying to be the man of the family, trying to protect his sisters and his mother, though what he needed was a guiding male hand.

"When he was 11 and guys would come over to see [his sister] Frances, George would sit there, this little black hat on, acting like he was glued to the TV set," says Barbara Gervin, who now works as Gervin's accountant. "George wouldn't leave the room with a guy and his sister in there. He became the man of the house. I think it hurt George more than the rest of us not having a father."

Barbara Gervin also remembers a different kind of scene in front of the TV, with her resting her head on her mother's knee while George rested his head on the other knee. This, more than the protective baby brother, was his childhood persona—quiet, shy, insecure in a tough neighborhood, assumed to be a mama's boy because he stayed close to home much of the time.

George spent his early school years just hanging around, racking up F's. At 5-8, he was no basketball star, either. In fact, he wouldn't even have made the junior varsity in his sophomore year at Martin Luther King High School if not for the intervention of assistant coach Willie Merriweather, who took a liking to "the little guy." Thanks to Merriweather, who expanded the jayvee roster by two spots—George was only second best of the players who

failed to make the squad—George got his first shot at organized ball. He responded by growing into a 6-0 run-and-gun forward, who was starting by the end of the season.

But there was trouble. His grades were so bad that, despite his obvious natural talent and newfound height (he was now 6-2), he was ineligible to play for the varsity in his junior year until the last four games. Of course, he made the most of his limited opportunity, scoring 28, 29, 30 and 27 points. In his senior year, now 6-6, he became a star, averaging 31 points and 21 rebounds per game, with a high game of 53 points. He made all-city and all-state teams.

"I didn't know him in high school, but I saw him play against my high school," says his wife, Joyce. "I remember saying, 'Don't give the ball to that skinny guy.'"

With some summer school after his junior year, Gervin got his grade-point average up to 2.2, good enough for Long Beach State and its coach, Jerry Tarkanian. More trouble. Gervin was homesick, and he didn't much like Long Beach State. Two weeks after school started, he transferred to Eastern Michigan University, where he had to sit out most of his freshman year. The next year, he averaged 29.5 points a game, and was named a College Division All-American.

And yet there was still more trouble, this time in a College Division NCAA semifinal game against Roanoke College. Eastern Michigan, which had an 18-game winning streak during the regular season, was trailing Roanoke by 15 points with seven minutes to play. It was a rough game, with Gervin having been the target of a few good shots, not an unusual tactic against a skinny guy who scores a lot. On a rebound, Gervin tried to even the score somewhat by throwing an elbow at Jay Piccola. A flagrant foul was called, and Gervin was ejected. "He came off the bench and walked slowly toward me," Piccola remembers. "I really thought he was coming to shake my hand. But he just hit me with a hard right. Knocked me cold."

Also knocked cold were Gervin's college basketball career and any chance of making the 1972 Olympic team. Unable to play ball, Gervin quit school.

"It completely tore him up inside," says Joyce, by then his girlfriend. "It was like he had lost his first love."

Gervin was shook. He went to Merriweather in tears, said he didn't know anything about school, didn't



the league and the various teams involved battled in court, Gervin hid out, not playing for San Antonio, knowing he was unwanted in Virginia. Finally, the deal was okayed in court.

"When he came to San Antonio after the contract business," says his wife, "he realized this is a stone-cold business. He loves basketball, don't get me wrong, but he knows it's not a boy's game. He's not going to give anything away anymore or let them get to his head. A lot of what happened made him grow up."

"I'm a pro now," says Gervin. "Check it out, like hitting Piccola. I did that before I was a pro."

Well, to tell the truth, pros see trouble, too.

During the summer of 1974, Gervin was arrested in Ypsilanti, Michigan, on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon, after admitting he had fired four or five shots from an apartment window. Last December, in an incident reminiscent of his fracas with Piccola, Gervin broke Alvan Adams' nose. Adams, the Phoenix Suns' center, said Gervin hit him with his fist while Gervin was driving for a layup. Gervin said he had unintentionally hit Adams with his elbow.

During the summer of 1981, reports that his wife had filed for divorce hit the San Antonio papers. Joyce, the mother of his three children and his wife of five years, blamed the parting on a lack of communication. The teenage sweethearts from Detroit suddenly found themselves in a different world. He came home now to be alone, to get away from the pressure of life in the NBA, not to have to deal with the demands of a wife.

Gervin moved out; then, a few weeks later, he came back. He told Joyce that his family was the most important thing to him, and he wanted to keep it together. If she was willing to give it another try, so was he.

know anything about getting a job. All he could do, he said, was play basketball. "Man, he was scared," says Merriweather.

Gervin tried semipro ball with the Pontiac Capparrells of the Continental League. At \$500 a month. It wasn't much, but it gave him a chance to get discovered by Johnny Kerr, a longtime NBA star and then a scout for the Virginia Squires. Kerr took Gervin to a Squire game, watched in awe as Gervin, alone on the court, hit 15 of 17 shots from long-range while the fans filed out, then signed the kid.

Accurate from ungodly range

After only a year and a half of high school ball, a year and a half of college and seven months in the minors, Gervin was a pro.

His career was just beginning, but the trouble was far from over. In January 1974, the Squires sold Gervin and his 25-point average to San Antonio for a reported \$225,000. The ABA protested on the grounds that Virginia was stripping its franchise. It had already sold Erving to the Nets. While

HAPPY

GEORGE GERVIN CAN BE ALONE IN San Antonio.

"I feel good here," he says. "A lot of guys in the league don't know what they're missing, but when they come down here, they want to stay. Ain't nobody ever rushing to get out of San Antonio. Only thing I don't do is eat that Mexican food. No insult to my fans, but that ain't me."

George Jr. (aka Ice Cube), age five, wanders in and grabs his daddy's long

leg. "This is business, G. Jr.," daddy says in a husky voice. George Jr. makes a sad face, lingers a moment, then turns and exits.

"G. Jr., my family, that's what's important," Gervin says, suddenly twisting around to turn the Crusaders down to background sounds. "When all the glory is gone, they'll still be here. I want to make some good memories for them, so they'll remember me good. I don't need New York or L.A. Why go up there and get into that type of temptation? I could make more money, but then who would George Gervin be?"

Outside Gervin's split-level, four-bedroom house is a small yard with a Jacuzzi to one side. In the driveway is his fishing boat, named "Tia" after his

daughter. Parked in front of the door is a Bronco four-wheel-drive truck, for pulling the boat, and two cars—a dark-brown Mercedes-Benz and a black Porsche. Beyond the stone house is a spill of similar houses, part ranch, part suburban, in a development called Green Spring Valley. The name isn't exactly right—the development has been thrown down in the midst of dirt roads, railroad tracks and flat, dusty land that goes and goes.

This is Gervin's paradise: too far west for the big Eastern papers, too far south for the big Western papers, too far off the beaten track for CBS, which televises the Spurs less often than space launches. It's as if there were a conspiracy to make George Gervin the pro game's mystery superstar, which is

fine with him. It keeps hassles to a minimum.

On the first day of practice this season, Stan Albeck was explaining that the new rules outlawing zones should give the Spurs more scoring from their center this year. Gervin, seated on the floor, started giggling. He looked over at George Johnson, the Spurs' 6-11 pivotman, whose lifetime scoring average is 5.7. It's a heck of a concept.

"Ice don't believe it," Albeck said, laughing, too. The rookies relaxed and giggled.

So far this season, relaxation has done well by Gervin and the Spurs. Gervin was leading the league in scoring with a 33.4 average, and the Spurs were in their customary spot atop the regular-season standings in the Mid-

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Nobody does it better.

Winston L

west Division as of January 12. "When I came here last year," says Albeck, "I knew I could go into every game with Ice's 35 in my pocket. My problem was finding out who could play the other roles."

When Albeck came to the team, he sat down with Gervin and told him he already had some scoring titles, but no "big ring." Gervin knew just what Albeck meant. "George and I have an agreement. He can take those wild shots—as long as they go in."

SOULFUL

THE SPURS AGAINST THE KNICKS AT the Garden. Fourth quarter. The

Knicks have just run off six straight points, and Albeck is afraid the game is getting out of hand. Albeck wants the ball to go to No. 44, the Iceman, GG, Bones, Mr. Oooh and Aaah, George Gervin.

Ice finally gets the ball out front on the right side. He looks over the Knicks' Michael Ray Richardson and sees nothing but a tangle of players inside. Cradling the ball on his right hip, Gervin tilts his icepick-thin body left, as if starting inside. Richardson shifts his feet, Ice takes off. Coolly, slinkily, he takes two steps on his stilts—nothing fast, nothing dazzling—and leaps up, 15 feet from the hoop. He leans toward the basket, his shooting hand facing up, and rolls the ball off his fingertips, underhanded,

toward the distant basket—like a Wilt Chamberlain finger-roll dunk from outer space.

Albeck is stunned. Mouth open, his face says to all, "What kind of playground, hot-dog crap is that when we need points?"

The ball swishes, nothing but net.

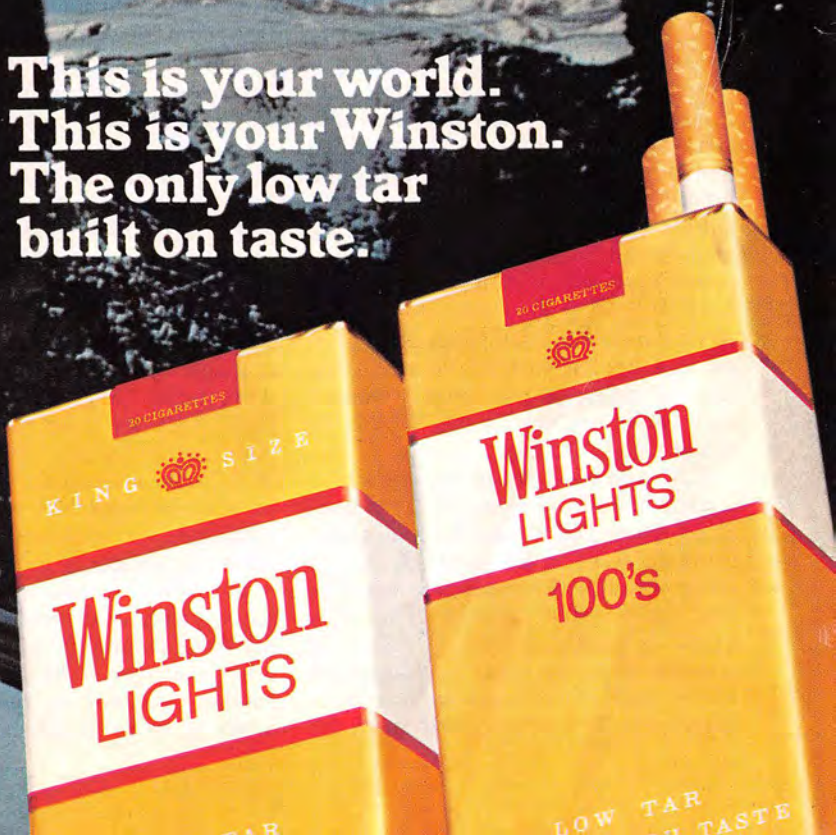
"The shot goes, and the whole Garden starts screaming," Albeck remembers, a year later. "Brothers are running up and down the aisles, giving each other high fives. The guys on the bench are laughing and falling down. I'm shaking my head. Man, the refs were smiling. Who's seen anything like that before?" ■

JUAN WILLIAMS is an editorial writer for The Washington Post.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

This is your world.
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The only low tar
built on taste.

ights



The Toughest S.O.B. Who Ever Lived

*Once he bit off a man's ear.
A lead pipe to the head couldn't
stop him. You had to be crazy
to tangle with Artie Diamond—
inside the ring or out.*

**By
Jose Chegui Torres**

Artie Diamond was clever and could evade punches whenever he so chose. The problem was, he never so chose. "He got hit to prove he wasn't afraid," Cus D'Amato says. "Not that he was a macho man. He was just a maniac."

Or as Artie himself so succinctly put it: "Only yellow fags are afraid to get hit."

BY THE TIME ARTIE DIAMOND turned pro in 1949, at the age of 20, his legend was already 10 years old. On his first day of his first job—selling newspapers in Chicago—Artie found himself in immediate fiduciary difficulties: no good corners available. So he followed his instincts. He beat up a grown man who had the corner young Artie wanted. A man who saw the way Artie handled himself suggested he become a fighter. Instead, several years later, Artie joined the Navy, got bored and came to New York, where he found Cus D'Amato.

Cus, who was later to manage Floyd Patterson and me to world championships, knew right away he had something different on his hands. As he led Artie through the ropes and into the ring for his first amateur bout, Cus heard a beastly, growling sound. It was just Artie, his upper lip contracted like a mad dog's, foam spilling from his mouth. This continued through the

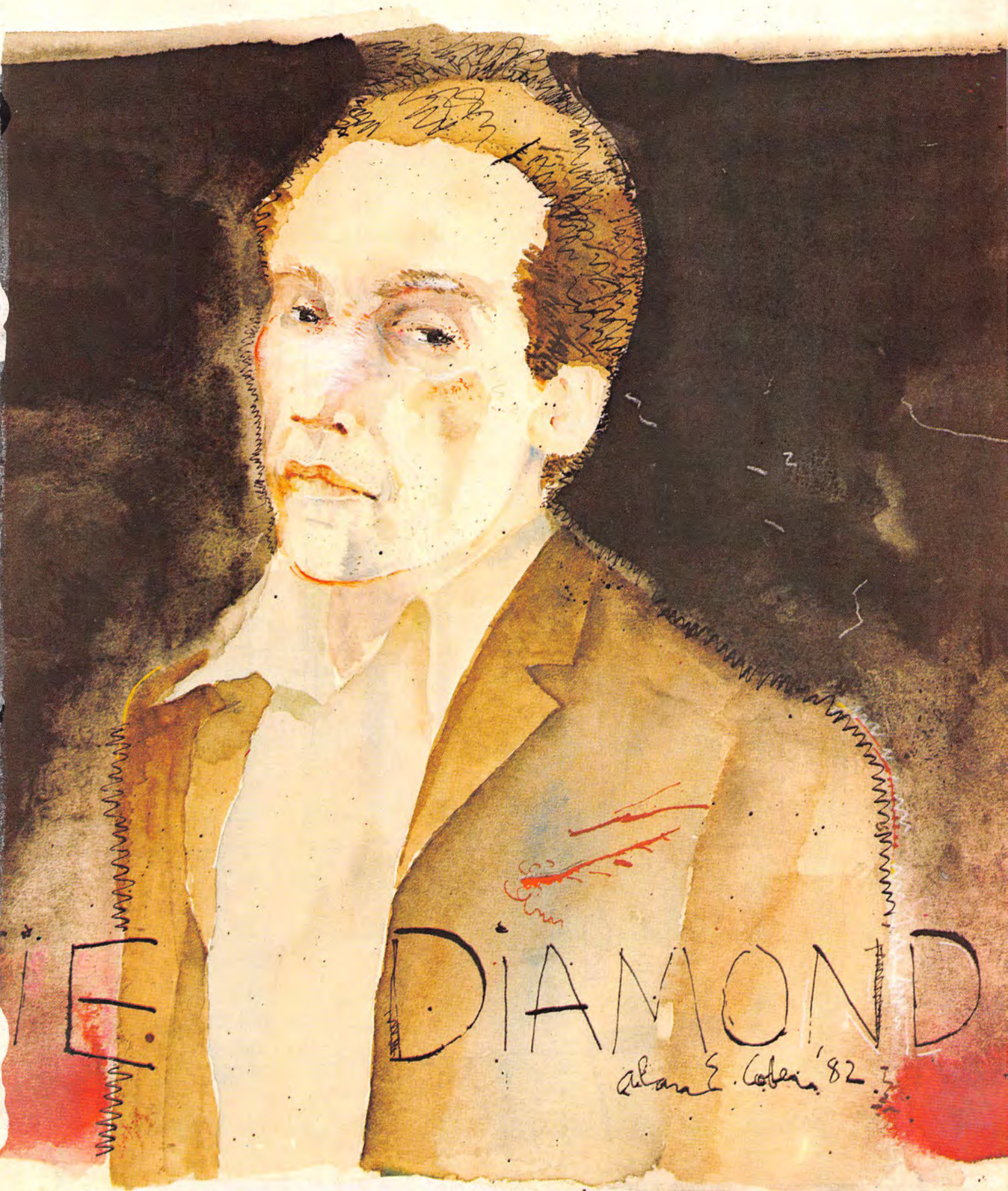
referee's instructions and the one round Artie's opponent managed to hang in there. "The truth is," Cus says, "Artie was not trying to intimidate the other guy. It was just his way of getting ready for action."

In less than a year, Artie fought 20 times as an amateur, winning 18, including 15 straight knockouts. Physically, he was not that imposing. He was 5-9, 160 pounds, and he walked as if he had difficulty keeping his balance. He had a rough, handsome face, brown hair and small brown eyes, and he talked through his flattened nose like Edward G. Robinson. His voice, firm and confident, his attitude, resolved and determined, and his unique way of getting psyched provided the only physical clues that Artie could be kind of dangerous at times.

The early 1950s were good years for small fight clubs in New York, and good years for small-time fight managers, who made the matches for their fighters and then told them. Once a manager approached Cus about a fight with Artie. "My guy only has a few fights and we need the action," the manager told Cus. "We want Artie." Well, not we exactly. When Artie's prospective opponent was told of the matchup, he screamed, "What! Me fight that goddamn nut? Never!"

For some reason, other managers seemed to have difficulty in appreciating Artie Diamond. At a weigh-in, another manager tried to psyche Artie, leaning over and snarling, "Your face is going to be smashed to pieces to-





Illustrations by Alan E. Cober



Artie's legend grew in various prisons, where his fists made him 'boss of all bosses'.

night." Artie jumped the guy *and* his fighter, and only the threat of a suspension got him to let go of the manager's neck.

After Artie turned pro, Rocky Graziano's manager came to Cus to make a match. Given Artie's pleasure in stopping punches with his head, Cus refused to put his fighter in with a banger like Graziano. When Artie heard about this, he blew up. "What the hell is going on here?" he asked Cus in anger. "I heard you turned down a fight with Graziano."

"I don't think you're ready for him now," Cus said.

"Bullshit," Artie growled. He pointed to the right side of his jaw. "If I closed my eyes and Graziano hit me here, and then a bum from the Bowery hit me here," and he pointed to the left side of his jaw, "do you think I'd be able to tell the difference?"

Well, no, thought Cus, which was precisely the problem. Cus felt Artie's habit of taking unnecessary punches could never be broken. "I couldn't, in good conscience, let my fighter and friend keep taking punishment," Cus says. "His health and future were more important than boxing." Despite a lifetime record of 24-9, Artie Diamond, under contract to Cus, was forced to retire against his will. He was only 22.

In the winter of 1951, several weeks later, Artie started his new career. He and two friends made plans to knock over an armored truck in the South Bronx. "I saw friends driving expensive cars and eating in good restaurants," Artie would explain. "I said to myself, 'Hey, what's this? What are they doing that I can't do?'"

Artie had a .45. "People respect a .45," Artie would say. But when he ordered one of the truck guards to freeze, the guy yelled for help. Artie pulled the trigger, the bullet hitting the guard in the head. His friends panicked but escaped. Artie didn't panic but was captured not far from the scene of the crime. Later, in court, Artie was presented with the results of his misdeeds: a man in a wheelchair, blind, paralyzed, part of his brain blown away. "What do you think about that?" the judge asked Artie.

"He's better off dead," Artie said, matter-of-factly.

The judge nailed Artie with a 7½–15 year sentence, but the former boxer never divulged the names of his accomplices. And the legend grew.

On Artie's first morning in prison, he sauntered through the yard, puffing a cigar, his attitude suggesting he ex-

pected the tough inmates to run from him and his boxing record. Instead, he saw eyes staring at him with sexual passion. Suddenly, somebody hissed. Artie paid no attention. The hissing continued. Artie turned slowly to face a big, muscle-bound black man who was showing his teeth as if he had just seen Raquel Welch naked. "Psst," the black man hissed. "Come here, good looking."

Artie glanced around, thinking the big man had to be talking to someone else.

"No, white boy, it's you. I'm talking to you."

"Me?" Artie asked, his eyes starting to roll and his legs trembling in anticipation of some violent action.

"As a matter of fact, yes," the big man said.

Other inmates began to gather—at a safe distance—to watch a ritual that was repeated every time a new, innocent face showed up in the joint. With any luck, they would witness a sexual conquest right there in the yard.

"How can I help you?" Artie asked, playing dumb.

The big man signaled Artie to come closer. "I assume you want no trouble in here, right?" the big man whispered in Artie's ear.

Artie shook his head in agreement.

"And I assume you want to have a nice, quiet, good life in here, right?"

Artie nodded.

"And you want to smoke the best cigars, eat the best food and be protected from all those animals over there," the big man assumed, pointing and winking at his grinning audience.

Artie nodded.

"Well, to get all that, the only thing you've got to do is to be my No. 1 wife. It's that simple." The big man laughed heartily. "That simple."

Artie smiled shyly and took the big man's head in his hands. He leaned forward, as if to whisper something sexy. Then he let out a shriek, like a wounded beast, and clamped his teeth onto the big man's ear, tearing at it in rage. As the man ran away, holding his head and screaming with pain, Artie turned toward the stunned convicts and calmly spit pieces of bloody flesh on the ground. Then he snarled. The crowd dispersed smoothly.

Prison rules were quite strict about matters like this. For biting off an ear, Artie got a month in solitary. But he never told prison officials why he had done it. "I just told them that I didn't like black people."

After he got out of the hole, Artie made inquiries. Who, he wondered,

were the toughest men in the place—the "bosses" among the Puerto Rican, black and white segments? When he found out, he beat them all up—in a single day—and proclaimed himself "boss of all bosses."

Years later, after I met Artie while visiting the prison, I befriended the warden and the chaplain at Greenhaven. Out of these relationships came a parole for Artie. I was then fast becoming a top middleweight contender, and Cus was my manager. Artie obtained his freedom by promising parole officers that he had a permanent job: assistant trainer in charge of conditioning for Jose Torres.

It had been almost eight years since Artie had seen the streets of the free world. Or a woman. Cus found Artie a room in the Bronx and ordered him to keep a constant eye on me. "I want Jose to be in tip-top condition every second of his life. He must be prepared for a call at a minute's notice."

I had just gotten married and my idea of good citizenship was to obey authority—right or wrong. My idea of a major crime was getting a traffic ticket. So having an ex-convict near me and my young wife worried me a little. Especially an ex-convict of legendary proportions. But everything worked out, though I could never really figure Artie. He had lots of violence in him, and he never hesitated to express it. But with me and my wife, he was soft and gentle, almost weak.

Still, I always felt tense—even at the gym—when having arguments with others in the presence of Artie. One night we walked into an Irish bar in Brooklyn, where I joined a group of men watching a fight on TV. Artie sat a few seats away, drinking a beer and apparently paying no attention to the rest of us. One man, fat, red-faced, obviously drunk, recognized me. "Torres is only a shadow of a real fighter," he said loudly. "I'm sorry, but I have to be honest. You can't fight a lick." Artie stood up, his eyes rolling and, before anyone could move, he grabbed the fat man by the throat, spat in his face, lifted him into the air and threw him against the jukebox. Artie was grunting and making animal sounds when I jumped in and pulled him away.

Even my trainer couldn't give me orders without worrying about Artie's reaction. In time, people who had been close to me in the past began to keep their distance. Artie radiated danger. He was good *to* me, though perhaps not good *for* me.

Artie the assistant trainer was like a

tough cop. Following Cus' orders, he worked me to exhaustion. Instead of running five miles in the morning, as I had for years, I was forced to run 10. The customary one-minute rest between rounds at the gym became a thing of the past. Artie wanted me to fight nonstop. I wasn't about to argue.

I was spending most of my free time selling tickets for my fights at Spanish clubs, bars, grocery stores and barber shops; making speeches at civic and social clubs; and generally spreading my name all over town. Very quickly, Artie got involved in this hectic social life—and tangled up with the wrong girl. "She's trouble," I would tell him. But Artie refused to listen and, when his eyes began to roll up in his head, I'd let it go. "Okay, okay," I'd say, "it's your future."

Three weeks after meeting this girl, Artie moved into her ground-floor apartment in Spanish Harlem. She was a short, plump Puerto Rican with a round face, large brown eyes and long black hair. She spoke Spanish and broken English, and she knew how to talk to Artie. She worked as a waitress in a midtown bar-restaurant and had been married a couple of times. After meeting her, Artie's wake-up-for-road-work visits decreased substantially. I began to feel uneasy.

One late morning, I went to the girl's apartment to find out what was going on with Artie. There was no bell at the door and I couldn't find Artie's name anywhere. I looked through an open window in one of the apartments. There was Artie's girl, sitting on the bed stark naked, laughing with a man who wore only a T-shirt. The man was not Artie Diamond. I knocked at the window. "Artie still lives here," the girl said, "but he's out working. He has a construction job in Queens." She begged me not to tell Artie what I had seen.

A few days later, Artie was arrested. He had been caught in the company of "undesirables" who were planning to hold up a Bronx factory payroll. Apparently, the police had been tipped off by someone. I suspected the Spanish girl, and so did Artie. "She knew about the whole scheme," Artie told me after he had been sent back to prison. "She even got me the piece." It was the weapon of choice, of course—a .45. I shook my head in disbelief.

Artie went back to Greenhaven, and the legend continued to expand. The day after I won the light-heavyweight title from Willie Pastrano, I went to visit him. "I'm afraid Artie won't be able to see you today," said the chap-

lain, Father Donovan. It seemed there had been a "scuffle," but Father Donovan assured me that Artie "was going to make it."

Apparently, some of Artie's fellow inmates were less than enamored by the way he comported himself in prison, and they resolved to teach him a lesson. A permanent one. The idea was for three black men to start an argument with Artie while a fourth snuck up behind him and smashed him over the head with a lead pipe. Everything went okay for the four until *after* Artie was smashed in the head. Somehow, he whirled around, took the pipe away from his attacker and beat him bloody with it. Then he went after the others. Luckily for them, he passed out first. The first guard who got to Artie thought he was dead. Artie remained unconscious for four days. Meanwhile, three of Artie's attackers were transferred to another prison. The fourth was moved to a hospital far from the one in which Artie was being treated. "They were as good as dead if they were still here when Artie got back," one inmate told me later.

The years passed. Artie was transferred to other jails. I lost the title, kept fighting for a while, retired, began writing for newspapers. I didn't see Artie anymore. He had vanished into the mists of time, as befits any legend. But his legend persisted. In Las Vegas, a fighter of Artie's era brought up his name. "Boxing today is weak," Jimmy Flood was saying to a group of onlookers at Caesars Palace. "We no longer see fiery battles like the one I had with Artie Diamond. We stood there, toe-to-toe for six rounds. They don't make them like Artie Diamond anymore." From time to time, some stranger would tell me about one or another of Artie's unbelievable deeds in jail.

Then one night, I was in a Spanish club where the music was loud, the liquor was plentiful and there was no space for any more people to dance. It was packed. Suddenly a familiar voice called out: "Jose! Jose!"

It was Artie. We embraced and drank together. Artie was now "chief security officer" of the place. He looked happy and well, and he had not changed much with time. He had been out of jail for a while, his first wife had died and his daughter was married "to a bum" and living somewhere in Brooklyn. He had remarried. "I want you to meet my new wife," he said. We exchanged addresses and telephone numbers.

Two weeks later, Cus called me at

home. "Artie was shot to death," he said flatly. Memories flashed through my mind. The afternoon in training camp when he smashed a large Pepsi bottle to bits over his head, just for fun. The time in the Bronx when he got into an argument with a cop over a parking ticket, and an old police sergeant appeared out of nowhere, jumped in between Artie and the cop, and told the officer, "No, no, that's okay. Let him go. That's Artie Diamond." And now Artie was dead, killed by a stranger who knew neither the man nor the legend.

"He couldn't have died any other way, Jose," Cus said.

Not many showed up for Artie's funeral. His mother, a successful businesswoman, was there. "We shouldn't be surprised at the way it all ended," Cus said to her. Artie's father, a prominent criminal lawyer, had succumbed to alcoholism several years earlier at a relatively young age. Artie's mother nodded sadly. Artie's widow and her relatives made up most of the small crowd. They also knew little of Artie Diamond, the man, and even less of his legend.

According to official medical records at Bellevue Hospital, Artie Diamond, 46, died instantly of a single bullet wound to his heart. Artie's boss, shot twice during the incident that killed Artie, was recuperating in a hospital. "Artie died peacefully," he said. "The killer called Artie to the bathroom, screaming, 'Come on, kick me out now, you bum.' When Artie moved toward the guy, the guy pulled a .38 and shot Artie once. Artie never knew what hit him."

Several weeks later, I visited the club, scene of Artie's violent death. "I was standing next to Artie when he kicked this junkie out for shooting up in the bathroom," said one employee. "The dude came back later with a pistol and emptied it in Artie's chest. But even with his body full of lead and all, Artie took the gun away from the junkie and smashed his head and face with it before falling dead."

"That's a truism," said another coworker. "Artie's chest and face were perforated with bullet holes, but that couldn't stop him from fighting all the way to the end."

Said a third "witness": "The junkie bastard had to be carried away with his face smashed to pieces."

The legend of Artie Diamond lives. ■

JOSE CHEGUI TORRES' last article for INSIDE SPORTS was on Roberto Duran.



TENNIS HUSTLERS

*If you're a doctor,
lawyer, studio chief
—and an ex-jock—
willing to put up \$50
for each set, you're
fair game*

**BY
ROSS WETZSTEON**

WES DOESN'T WANT TO talk. His game looks a little klutzy, like he's just staying in points by blocking and blooping, like he couldn't hit a winner off you in a week, but he makes \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year on tennis courts. Nobody is supposed to know that, and so the last thing he wants is publicity. As far as he's concerned, it's better for business that nobody knows his name. It's better that nobody knows there's an underground of tennis hustlers in New York, California, Hilton Head, Miami, Texas, Las Vegas—pros who got into the top 200 a couple of years ago, guys who give lessons at your local club, college kids who need a little dough. They hang out in the \$1,000-a-year clubs, buddying up with the locker-room attendants, flirting with the girls who schedule the courts, keeping an eye out for the broker or business executive or corporate lawyer—ex-jocks, most of them, not ex in their heads—who've turned to tennis in their 30s or 40s and think their games are a lot better than they are and like to put a little down to prove it. Not much, say \$50 a set, just to make it interesting.

Wes purposely keeps his game looking klutzy. People think they can take him four sets out of five. At \$50 a set he can make a pretty nice living. Tennis hustling? Naw, that's the kind of thing they do in pool or golf. He doesn't want to talk about it.

Photographs by Ken Regan/Camera 5

So the first rule is, Wes isn't his real name. He'll talk to me if I call him Wes—and he usually talks better over dinner somewhere, say the Oak Room at the Plaza. And he could give me some pointers if we could play a couple of sets tomorrow. "Fifty a set," he says, "that's my price. And I'll tell you all about bisques." I don't know any-

never lost a third or fourth as long as I can remember. By hitting harder? No way. That's when junk helps.

"I want you to beat yourself on your best shots—notice the way I put it. That's crucial in hustling, making the guy beat himself. I don't want you to think I've won, but that you've lost. That's how I get another set. If the

once a week, or a beautiful backhand once a month, and he thinks that's his game. Psychology again. Every player, no matter how good or bad, thinks his *best* game is his *normal* game, and as long as he's losing on his errors and not on your winners, he'll shell out another \$50.

"Look, it takes me three swings to



thing about bisques, but I'm learning about hustling.

"I always win 6-4, 6-4," Wes says, slicing into his Beef Wellington. Wes is in his late 20s, about 6-1, 170 pounds, a good build for tennis, a good appetite for the Oak Room. "Sometimes I win 6-3 if the guy can't get anything back, or 7-5 if it looks like he's good for another couple of bills. Most guys'll lose four, sometimes six sets before they've had enough. There's a lot of ego on the courts. And I keep it tantalizing, just good enough to win. I win about 19 sets out of 20. If a guy is really on and I'm really off, he might take a set the first time, but I've

guy thinks he's been beaten, he knows I'm better than he is and he won't bet again. But if he's blown it, he's just off his game, and he'll get it back the second set. If I take you playing like Borg, you'll never go for another bet.

"I'm never going to hit a winner off you. I'll just keep hitting it back until you make an error. You hit it back 100 times and I'll hit it back 101. Even in the pros, most points aren't won, they're lost. But everybody who picks up a racket thinks his errors are just mistakes he won't make the next time.

"Another thing. You take a guy who can get off a great serve every now and then, or a fantastic forehand

\$50 here, \$50 there—it adds up

read a guy's game—one forehand, one backhand, one serve. From then on, he's mine."

He dabs at the corners of his mouth with Plaza linen. "See you tomorrow and tell you about bisques."

A LOT OF MONEY CHANGES hands on the courts, a lot more than people might think. There's straight betting (usually between regular partners), handicap betting (usually between a club member and a club pro),

and there's Wes—and Richie and Sal and a couple of hundred other hustlers—the third kind of bettor, keeping an eye out for the other two types.

At one of San Francisco's largest clubs, for instance, there's the first kind of betting. Half the lunch-hour games are for money, guys who play each other a couple of sets once or twice a week, who like to think there's something at stake. "These are guys who own their own companies, or presidents of businesses," says the kid at the desk, "guys who have a lot of time and money. They come here to sign their chits and borrow my pen to write out checks. Fifty a set, plus court fees, balls, lunch and drinks."

"Nobody wins or loses a lot," one of the presidents tells me in the locker room, blow-drying his hair. "Over a year it more or less averages out." The manager comes out to the bar to request that the name of the club go unmentioned. "I'd like to keep it between members as much as possible."

At a club in Manhattan, one of those places with a pool and sauna and fulltime masseuse, limos pull into the parking lot and two guys in the stock market get out for their weekly doubles game, each partnered with one of the club pros. Straight betting again, but \$50 is tip money here, tips for the pros. They're playing for \$1,000 a set, every Thursday afternoon. They're making each other work for it, too, and the pros are taking it to them the way pros take it to women in mixed doubles. One week they reach a tie-breaker and at set point, second serve, \$1,000 riding on just getting it in play, the bald guy tosses it up, hitches in his swing and flubs it into the net. The pros zip up their rackets, looking the other way.

And in the Hamptons several years ago, an investment banker had a court built on his estate, no cheap asphalt job with wire fences, but a first-rate clay surface with thick hedges. Then the contractor came in with his bill—\$25,000. The banker said, "How about a set, double or nothing?" They'd played before, their games about even. The contractor said, "OK." Marxists will be glad to know the workingman beat the capitalist 7-5.

The second kind of betting is also between guys who know each other's games, usually member and pro, but there's enough difference that one of them has to give points. Scoring handicaps are more common on the West Coast—usually the member at 2-0 and serve. Shot handicaps are more common in the East. "They take

away one of your strokes," says the pro-owner of a small club in Queens. "No aces, for instance, or no second serve, or no passing shots or lobs. Or, if you're really far apart, no outright winners—nothing he can't get his racket on—which means chips and chops all afternoon, still six-love but you have to work harder."

"The most common handicap," a teaching pro from Manhattan says, "is you can't come to the net. It's OK with me—saves me a lot of running."

Another Manhattan pro says, "I played a game once where I couldn't even come in past the service line. Another time—this was the hardest—I had to alternate between my forehand and backhand, every other shot. I made it look harder than it was."

"Handicap games," says an L.A. pro, "are mostly just fantasy games to keep the members happy. Your average high intermediate, low expert, every now and then he's going to hit a shot McEnroe might have made and he fantasizes that he's ready to move up a notch. The difference, of course, is that the club player can make it one time out of 100 and McEnroe can make it 99 times out of 100. But they think handicaps give them a shot at winning, when they don't even make the score closer. It's only closer because you go easy, you want to get them again. It's not outright hustling, but it's close. So you give him a handicap, you don't play all out, he hits a few great shots, he pulls out a couple of games, he's lost \$50, but he can tell everybody that the pro beat him only 6-4. He's forgotten he was ahead 30-love every game, or you didn't have your first serve. All he remembers is the score. What he really wants is the illusion he can take a few games. I don't call that betting, I call that tipping."

"I'll lose once in awhile. Maybe once every 15 games. The important thing to remember is that tennis is a game of levels. I'm 10 levels above most guys in this club, but one is all you need. One is what kept me off the circuit. Even one level up and you'll win nearly every time. Let me give you a tip. Never—I mean *never*—bet a guy if you need to get points."

The third kind of betting is Wes' kind. Not Bobby Riggs'. That's not hustling, that's entertainment. Minnesota Fats walks into a room, nobody's going to say, "How about a game?" and expect to win. Same with Riggs. He'll play with a broom, or with a dog on a leash, or with a suitcase or open umbrella in his left hand—even while

serving—and nobody expects to win. Six folding chairs on his side of the court, put them wherever you want, you'll hit a chair once every 10 shots, he'll take you love and love.

When Riggs was on the tournament circuit in the late '30s and early '40s, he didn't have any power but he didn't have any weaknesses. He'd retrieve everything and junk it back. Budge and Kramer *hated* playing him. With that kind of game, it's no wonder he beat the seedings more often than any player in history. And with that kind of record, it's no wonder he took up betting. But now he has buttons he gives you—"I Was Hustled By Bobby Riggs." You don't pay for the chance to win but to be part of show business.

Wes and Richie and Sal aren't into show business. You play Wes or Richie or Sal and you play for \$50, not some button. If a lot of money is changing hands, a lot of guys like Wes and Richie and Sal are going to be figuring angles—but quietly. Nobody wants to talk much about the first two kinds of betting, but pinning anybody down on hustling is nearly impossible.

Half a dozen club managers in New York say they don't know anything—"No, nothing, sorry"—though one goes so far as to admit, "When I see one, I politely tell him I don't want to see him playing any members." The manager of a midtown club finally says, not for attribution, that he knows three regulars at his place. A regular's good for a match or two a day. Another manager winks and says, "Maybe none, maybe four," and a third smiles and says he wouldn't say yes but he wouldn't say no to knowing a couple at every club.

The owner of a smaller club talks more freely. A former hustler himself, he tells me he played a lot in Las Vegas in the early '70s, lost it all in the slots, figured *he* was the one being hustled and came back East. In New York, he says, they're teaching pros mostly, teaching at one club a couple of hours a day and picking up games at others. They hang out a lot together and swap names. There's a guy downtown who's looking for some games, ask Rosie at the desk—that kind of thing.

"If you're hustling, of course you can't seek out games," he says. "You have to wait for players to come to you. So they do a lot of setting each other up, passing a player around. There's one player, a former college football star now on Wall Street, who likes to bet \$100 a couple of times a week. He's pretty good. Got to watch

him on line calls, though, make sure your shots are at least six inches in. They've been passing him around for months now, half a dozen guys, nursing him like a baby, letting him win one out of every four or five games to keep him interested. He thinks the scores are close because he's good. In that respect, I guess you could say he's getting his money's worth. And he probably beats all the players he bets who aren't hustlers, so in the long run he breaks even.

"Hustlers move around a lot; it works best if they're not a familiar face, but not a complete stranger either. I see maybe four or five in an average week." He'd appreciate it if I didn't mention his name or his club.

ALTOGETHER, A COUPLE of hustlers here, three or four there, more than four dozen clubs in the city—and even with overlapping there's got to be 40 or 50 hustlers in New York alone, making \$20,000 a year. Close to a million-dollar business.

Wes says Miami and Vegas are about the same, California and Texas half as much again. "There're more games in California but larger bets in Texas," he says. "Some of those guys

don't even know they've lost unless they're out a grand." Sal says it goes on all over the country, not just on the coasts, and gives names and numbers in Cleveland and Denver.

The first four club managers I reach in Hilton Head, the South Carolina resort area, are politely evasive, but the fifth says, "Pick a number." "For your club or the resort?" "The resort. Give me a number." "Five." "Higher." "Ten." "Higher." "Fifteen." Silence. "Fifteen?" "I didn't say a thing."


The managers on Hilton Head Island discourage betting, but it's still a better venue for hustlers than clubs. There's a lot of turnover and they're dealing with transients. Two or three places quietly let Sal know they'd be only too glad to schedule games for him, just please no betting. But most managers look the other way. No one's getting a cut, he's just a nice kid making a few bucks. That's one of the secrets of hustling—even people who spot you, figure you're only picking up an odd \$50 here and there, they wonder what you do for a living.

Sal's a fulltime parttimer, sleeping with a couple of waitresses and picking up a couple of games a day. Sal used to be an actor in soaps under his

real name, too good-looking for his own good, mid-20s, lean but muscular, a little intimidating if you're putting down \$50. That's why he chose a hot-and-cold style over steady. No one'd believe his game was plugging it out, hanging in.

"I was pretty good in college," he says, "made the NCAA. I was thinking of turning pro but I played McEnroe once, when he was a freshman at Stanford. We were on the court three minutes and I knew it was all over. It's like you're in a 100-yard dash and two steps out of the blocks this guy is already two steps ahead of you and pulling away—no way you're going to catch him. He's as much better than I as I'm better than the guys I play. Tennis hustlers are good, but don't let them fool you. If they were *that* good they'd be in the computer, not sitting around on terraces. I could give lessons, I guess, but my parents used to come down here. I like the life. It's not like I'm smuggling coke."

How can you spot a hustler? "Watch the footwork," says Sal. "They may fake on their groundstrokes, or take a lot off their serves, but if they're really good they never waste a step, they're never off balance, you can see their game in their feet,

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it's the one thing they can't fake. That's why you never hear of hustlers playing each other—they can tell in less than a minute."

Friends of his, Rob and Dean, teaching pros from New York, stop by for a couple of weeks every fall on their way to clubs in Miami and Sal will fix them up. "Dean practically blew it last fall," he says. "He takes a dislike to this heavyset guy, the kind who argues over out calls. One thing, we never cheat. We don't have to. Anyway, Dean gets ticked off at this guy. The guy's not really whining but he's giving him stares every three shots—you know, the 'You're sure that was out?' stare. So Dean really opens up in the second set; the first was 6-4 but now it's 6-0 and Dean's firing aces and putting away his second serve and everything. So the guy knows he's been taken and refuses to pay. Dean doesn't care, he just says 'asshole' and walks away."

Peter comes by, too, Sal's cousin, the captain of his college team. He makes it down during midterms for an easy couple of hundred. "Peter's got a strong game," says Sal, "but he's not a good enough actor yet. He can't play bad convincingly." Sal can look awful. He can look so awful winning 6-4 you want to give him points in the second set. "It's harder than you'd think, playing my game. Look at it this way—it's just as hard to hit it six inches out as six inches in, you're still drilling spots. And I can never fall back on junk, not with my shots. The guy's thinking I'm just a wild man, all he's got to do is keep it in play until I bang it out. And if I slice one on him, he catches on right away."

"One guy comes up to me after a game and tells me all I need is a few lessons, I'll be a first-rate player. He was really a nice guy, he was giving me tips—keep my head down, bend my knees more. Another time I beat this oil man from Dallas, a really good player in a tough match and afterwards we're having a drink. He tells me if I'm ever in Dallas to look him up, that he plays a lot of doubles for big money, he'll set me up as his nephew and we'll hustle a couple of thousand easy. I pretend I'm surprised. You mean they do that kind of thing? He gave me his card, though, and if I'm ever in Dallas. . . ."



ES AND I GET TOGETHER to play and he finally tells me about bisques. Bisques turn out to be free points and you can take one any-

time you want. A lot of big betting in the East is done with bisques these days. You negotiate before a set. Someone'll give you two, you ask for six, you compromise on four. "Figure it out," says Wes. "You need 24 points to win a set. Say I give you a love-30 handicap every game, that's 12 points. I give you six bisques, that's 18 points and you only have to win six points. Now, to be frank, you're not going to get six points off me, but let's give it a try, OK?"

Wes starts to the baseline, turns around, comes back to the net.

"You've got to be careful when you use your bisques," he says. "Obviously if you win the first point, if you've got me down love-40, you've got the game. But you shouldn't. . . ."

"Don't use your bisques until it's 30-40," I interrupt. "Yeah, I see."

"Exactly. Who knows what could happen? If you get me down love-40 you just hit out until it's 30-40, you might get lucky and win a point on your own. You might not need to use a bisque. But you'd be surprised how many guys'll waste one at love-40 or 15-40—they're too anxious to get the game. Now what I'm going to do is watch the bisques. I'm watching them even more closely than the score. My strategy is to make you use your bisques by the time you get four or five games—then I'll just run out the set."

I ration my bisques like water in a lifeboat. I've got six, all I have to do is get to 40 before he gets to 30 six times and I've got the set. I begin to see what he means about strategy. The points he wants, the crucial points here, aren't the deuce points as in a regular game, but the ones when he's down love-40 or 15-40. He wants to bring it up to 30-40, never let me take a game on a winner. Always make me take it on a bisque, make me use them up. A couple of times, my serve at 40-30, I decide to risk it, play the point rather than use the bisque. A couple of good rallies but hell, both times he reads my down-the-line forehand—"I knew where every shot was going before you hit it," he says—we're at deuce and I have to use two bisques or lose the game. By the time I'm at 4-5, Wes serving at 40-30, set point, I have to use my last two bisques just to go ad-out. But three errors and he's won 6-4.

"I played the bisques badly," I say. "I shouldn't have had to use two just to get an ad."

"Your only alternative was to take both of them at deuce and make it five-all," Wes says, talking like a teacher

now, not a hustler. "But then you'd have none left and I'd just run it out to 7-5. No, you played them well."

Second set, instant replay. I'm playing the bisques well, but not the points. I punch a high-kicking serve into the tape and it's over.

"You Australian?" I ask him.

"How can you tell?"

"You've got a slight accent."

"I try to hide it—it's not good for business."

I'm hoping he'll say more, but he's obviously just waiting for his money.

"Let me buy you a beer."

"OK."

At the bar he opens up a little. Promising teenager in Sydney. Final eight in junior tournaments. Top 32 after that. Made the quarterfinals of a couple of invitationals, but no way he could go farther. Typical hustler background. A level or two below the circuit. Get out altogether or give lessons. Or hustle. Came to L.A., then New York. No way he'd go back to Sydney. Doesn't make a lot—none of the hustlers make a lot—about \$300 to \$600 a week seems average. No one notices—\$50 here, \$50 there. Doesn't seem like much but it adds up. And it's tax-free. A scrounging life, actually, not glamorous at all. Not matches with Billie Jean or guest appearances on Saturday afternoon TV. Lots of hanging out. A small apartment in upper Manhattan, a couple of girlfriends, rather go to a bar, have a couple of beers than read or watch TV. Closing in on 30. Can't hustle forever. Maybe get a teaching spot at some club eventually, but rather not think about it now.

"Another beer?"

"Sure."

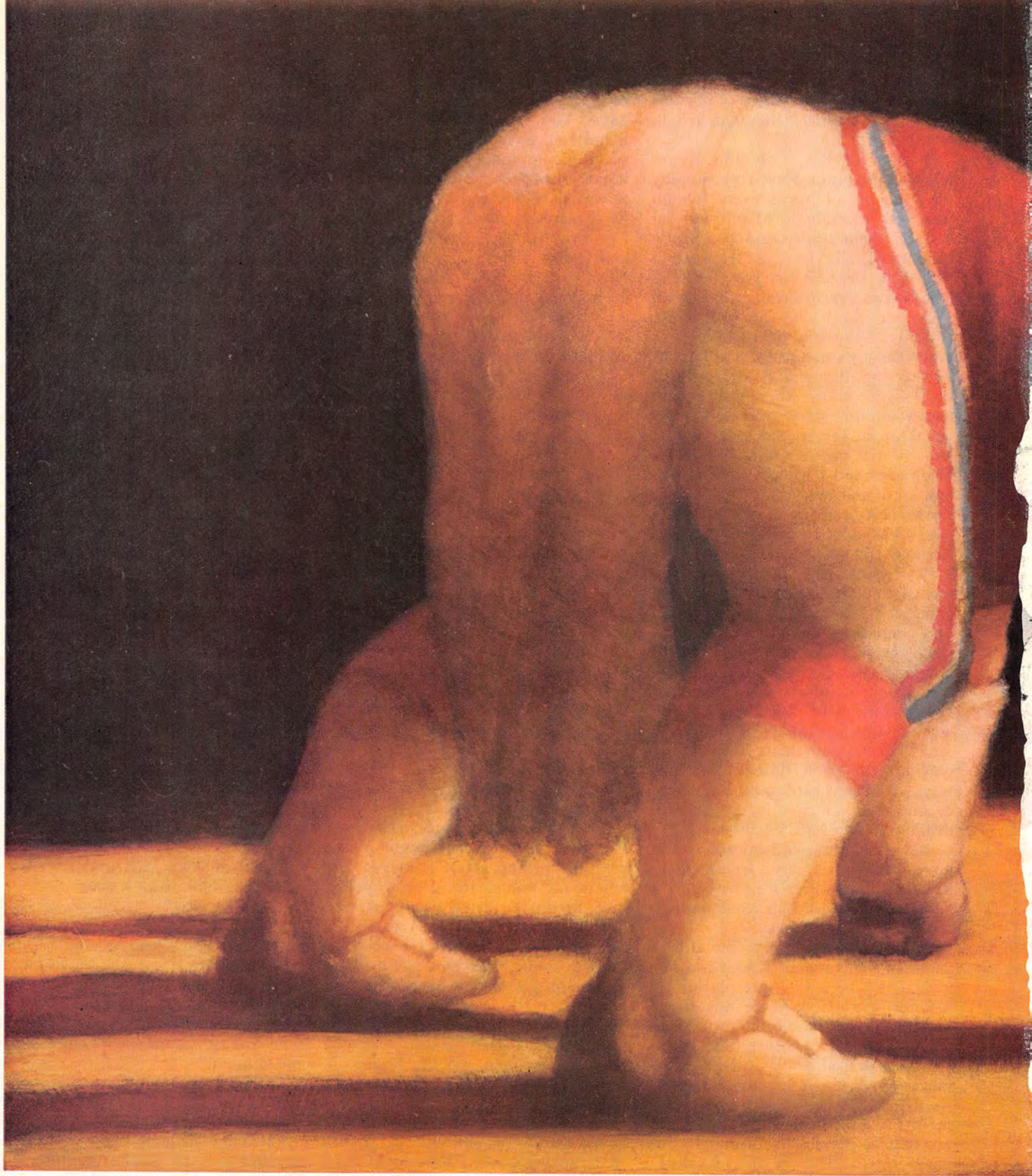
The girl who schedules courts walks by. Wes winks at her, she smiles back.

"Well, look," he says, finishing the second beer and standing up, "I've got to get going. If you have any friends who like to bet on their games, keep me in mind."

"OK." I take out my wallet, hand him five twenties. "Thanks for the lesson in bisques."

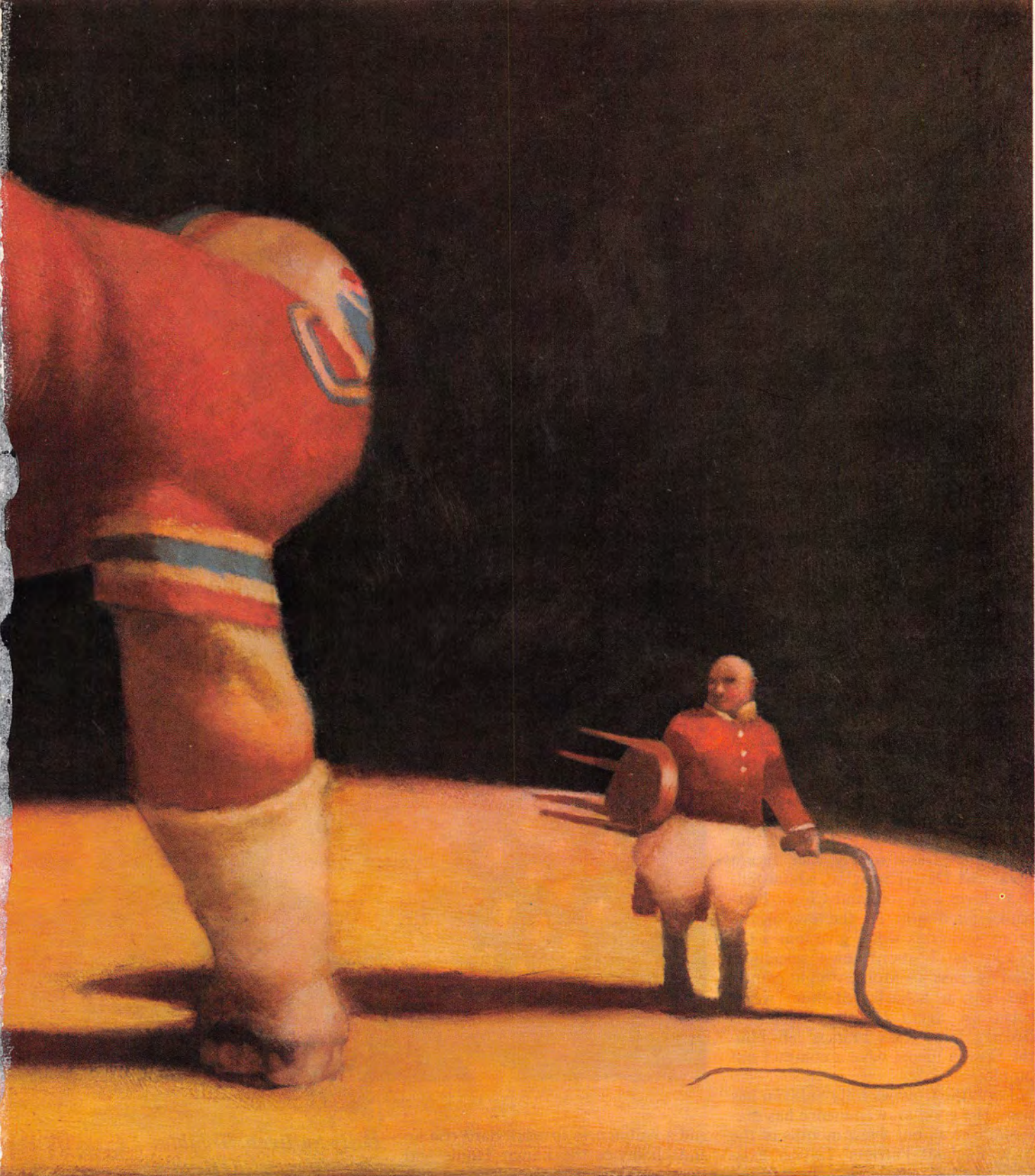
"It's not bisques," Wes says, "it's psychology." He smiles, pointing his forefinger at his temple. "You want to know the secret of hustling? It all comes down to one thing." He slips the twenties into his wallet. "There's not a guy in this country—I mean not one single guy—whose game is as good as he thinks it is. Thanks for the beers." ■

ROSS WETZSTEON is a senior editor and theater critic at The Village Voice.



SOMETHING'S ROTTEN

Year after year, the Patriots tangle with their owner, their owner toys with his players and everybody loses



IN FOXBORO

By Steve Marantz

Painting by Brad Holland

THE STUPOR BOWL BETWEEN THE NEW ENGLAND Patriots and the Baltimore Colts started like this:

Patriot running back Vagas Ferguson lost a yard off tackle. The Patriots were penalized five yards for a false start. Fullback Sam Cunningham lost a yard off tackle. Quarterback Tom Owen was sacked, fumbled and recovered for an eight-yard loss. The Patriots punted, Baltimore fumbled

and the Patriots recovered, but Patriot Steve King was penalized for moving down field too soon. Punting again, Rich Camarillo hurried an eight-yard kick.

The Patriots fell to the occasion and lost 23-21, thereby winning the No. 1 college draft choice in April. Somehow, winning by losing did not seem improper for this franchise.

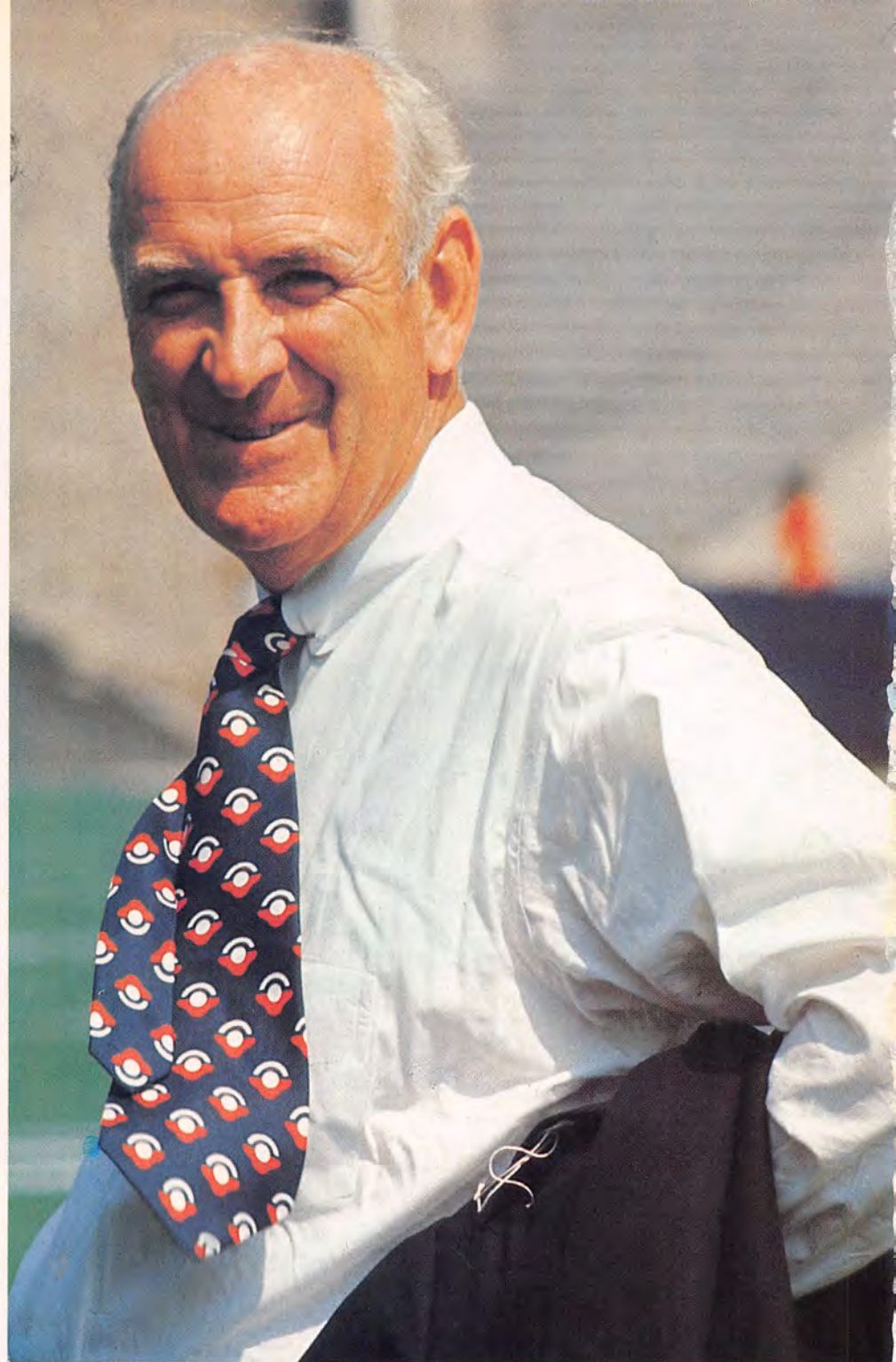
Owner Billy Sullivan stood in the locker room and said that no decision had been reached about coach Ron Erhardt and his staff. Sullivan was going to wait until after Christmas, he said, "because I feel there are more important things to do during this Advent season and during Christmas. It's more important to pray for the people in Poland and in Northern Ireland."

Two days later, Sullivan fired Erhardt and his staff. But Sullivan's prayers were not entirely in vain. That day, travel restrictions were relaxed in Poland. Northern Ireland was quiet.

LORD, THE TROUBLES BILLY Sullivan has seen. His gypsy Patriots wandered the streets of Boston 11 years, strangers in strange stadiums. One of his partners choked to death on a piece of meat, others tried to choke him in a stock takeover. Cardinal Cushing supposedly made a crack about him being cheap. His coach, Clive Rush, ordered the team bus the wrong way down a one-way street. Joe Kapp wouldn't sign his contract. Referee Ben Dreith robbed him of his Super Bowl trophy, Jack Tatum paralyzed Darryl Stingley, whom Sullivan loves as a son, and Chuck Fairbanks jilted him on the eve of the prom. Congress won't give him a tax break, the Foxboro town selectmen won't license his Monday night games, the fans at Schaefer Stadium won't sober up, agent Howard Slusher is fleecing him, Russ Francis left him, the Boston media have a contract out on him.

Lord, the troubles Billy Sullivan has seen. His good gray eminence has presided over all but a few months of the New England Patriots' 22-year existence. It hasn't been easy, he will tell you. Sullivan, the oldest son of a town clerk, newspaper correspondent and sometime fight promoter, sees the dim outline of Horatio Alger in the mirror. Young Billy learned early how to work a crowd. It was a skill he parlayed into PR jobs with Boston College, Notre Dame, the Naval Academy and the Boston Braves.

"Where else but America," he asks, "could a poor kid with average ability



and a willingness to work hard rise up and challenge the Lamar Hunts and Bud Adamases, who were heirs to millions of dollars?"

Where else, indeed, could a team such as the Patriots exist but in the heart and soul of a Billy Sullivan? Lord, the troubles the Patriots have seen. The 1981 season, the 1980 season, the 1979 season.

"People ask me why I do this," says Sullivan. "I don't want a pile of money in a Swiss account. I just want to leave the world a better place."

Billy Sullivan: Troubles

When the Patriots win, Sullivan walks amidst the paying customers at Schaefer Stadium, beaming, shaking hands, waving. He is radiant at these moments. "This is what it's all about," he tells one of his general managers. "What about winning a championship?" the man asks him. "This is more important," says Sullivan.

When the Patriots lose, Sullivan often takes the back way to the locker

room. He took the back route often in 1981. Four games into the season the Patriots were 0-4. They were not the only 0-4, but they were the only 0-4 pegged at 8-1 to win the Super Bowl, the only 0-4 with seven Pro Bowl selections. They were football's leading underachievers, hardly a reflection of their owner. Sullivan views their adversity as a chance to grow, as he has grown from adversity.

Billy Sullivan likes to tell a story about his humble upbringing in Lowell, Massachusetts, a dusky mill town. "I remember coming home from my first day at school in the first grade. My mother asked me if I did well. I said, 'No, mother, I don't think so.' And she said, 'Remember, William, the important thing is that you behave honorably.' I've never forgotten that.

"The best thing for the Patriots may have been to lose our first four games," says Sullivan. "My philosophy is that it's good to be knocked on your rear once in a while. You get to see what you're made of."

Billy Sullivan looked. Two and Fourteen. Trouble, everywhere. And everywhere trouble looked, there was Billy Sullivan.

PITTSBURGH'S JON KOLB SAID OF the Patriots, "We look at their films and we see great talent." Dallas' Tony Dorsett said, "It's unbelievable they're 0-3." Houston's Earl Campbell said, "I've been trying to figure how they're 1-5 and can't."

Buffalo defeated them on an unbelievable 36-yard deflected TD pass on the last play. "I can't understand how they're 2-10," said Fred Smerlas. "But after seeing this, I understand."

The Patriots do not merely lose, they lose dramatically. They lost to the Jets 28-24 when they couldn't score from a first-and-goal at the three with 31 seconds remaining.

In 1980, when they missed the playoffs by a game, a fumbled exchange on the Los Angeles two-yard line in the fourth quarter helped cost them a victory. Houston scored on a tipped pass and won by four. Steve Grogan threw six interceptions in a four-point loss to weak San Francisco.

On the Monday night John Lennon was shot, Miami beat them in overtime after John Smith's 35-yard field-goal attempt with four seconds left in regulation was blocked. As much as anything, the Patriot 2-10 Monday night record has contributed to their reputation as bumbling choke artists.

When the going gets rough, the Patriots get roughed up. Overtime losses

to Pittsburgh and Miami in 1981 ran their overall overtime mark to 0-6.

Close games make the Patriots claustrophobic. In only two of their 19 victories in 1979 and 1980 did they come from behind in the late minutes. Of their 13 losses those two years, eight were by five points or less. Of their 19 wins, one was by five points or less. In 1981, in addition to two overtime losses, the Patriots lost five more games by a total of 12 points. They lost 14 by a total of 92.

Down the stretch, the Patriots invariably pull up lame. Their first-half record over the four seasons prior to last year was 23-8; the second-half record was 16-15. Last season they didn't wait until the second half to fold.

They've been expected to win since 1976 when they went 11-3 and lost an infamous playoff game to Oakland, which then won the Super Bowl.

"We had a great year in '76," says linebacker Steve Nelson, "and we've been expected to win the Super Bowl since. But we were able to catch people off guard in '76 because we had won only three games the year before."

The '76 playoff loss stands as a symbol of the ill-fated franchise, cited second behind the misfortune of brilliant wide receiver Darryl Stingley.

The Patriots led 21-17 with 50 seconds remaining. Oakland had a third-and-18 at the New England 27. Ray Hamilton hit Ken Stabler as he was passing and was called for roughing the passer by ref Ben Dreith. The films show Hamilton making contact when Stabler was at the top of his motion. Nevertheless, Oakland got a first down on the penalty, got another penalty on Hamilton for unsportsmanlike conduct and finally scored.

In 1978, Stingley was paralyzed by Jack Tatum's hit in an exhibition. That same year, before the last regular game of the season, GM-coach Fairbanks' defection to the University of Colorado produced more chaos. Circumstances seem to conspire against the Patriots, although the rationalists among them have difficulty conceding to something so intangible as luck. "We're not a bad-luck team," says Nelson. "We're an unfortunate team."

GM Bucko Kilroy throws injuries into the bad-luck bag. "I don't need to look for complicated explanations," he said. "We've been hurt more than anybody. And we don't have the depth of a Dallas or L.A." Kilroy pointed out that starting quarterback Steve Grogan and backup Matt Cavanaugh suffered knee injuries in 1980.

Kilroy did not point out that the Patriots have not drafted and kept a good defensive lineman since Julius Adams 10 years ago. They have not used a first or second pick for a defensive lineman in that time, even after that weakness was apparent.

"We go for the best available athlete," said Kilroy. "Why go for a defensive lineman? The way the game is now, it takes a couple of years before he can contribute." This observation may perplex those who have admired Bubba Baker and Bob Baumhower as rookies. It no doubt perplexed coach Ron Erhardt, who waited through three drafts for defensive-line help and was still waiting when he was fired in December. His team was known for its Red Sea Defense because it allowed an average of 184.4 yards rushing, the league's worst in 1981.

Erhardt's teams fluctuated between being careless and tentative in crucial situations. His personality was a welcome change from the chilly Fairbanks, but his chummy rapport with players may have relaxed them too much.

Paradoxically, one starter thought Erhardt transmitted a nervousness because he was working under a one-year contract. If so, Erhardt had good reason. Three of his original assistants, Jim Ringo, Ray Berry and Hank Bullock, were candidates to replace Fairbanks. When Erhardt got the job, Billy Sullivan kept the other three as Erhardt's assistants.

After Erhardt's second season he was told to fire assistants Tom Yewcic and John Polonchek against his will. He lost linebacker coach Bill Parcells because the Patriots didn't come through with a three-year contract and a \$2,000 raise. Parcells went to the New York Giants and helped shape one of the league's best defenses. Erhardt had no say in the hiring of Babe Parilli as an assistant. He also was told he should hire a black coach, who turned out to be Bobby Griener.

"My big mistake was in not demanding a five-year contract when I signed on," said Erhardt. "A football coach has to be in control of the football operation." Erhardt's final delusions about control were crushed in the next-to-last game of 1981. Billy Sullivan walked into the coaches' room on the upper level of the Schaefer Stadium pressbox and sent Erhardt the message, "Isn't it time to play Owen at quarterback?" Erhardt replaced Cavanaugh with Owen.

The most damning knock on the players themselves is that they lack



character. This perception has grown with each last-minute flub and each late-season collapse. Naturally, they react bitterly to this suggestion, boycotting *Boston Globe* writer Mike Madden in 1980 after his criticism, which ended, "There can be only one conclusion. The Patriots are losers."

And the public can only wonder, when certain of the outspoken players question the team's effort. In 1979 John Hannah said, "Some of our players didn't want to bust their butts enough. We have the talent, but we

John Hannah: Still bitter

lack the dedication and maturity." Again, last season, Hannah said, "Some of our backups lack the preparation of mature professionals."

Tight end Don Hasselbeck voiced the same doubt before last season.

"We were rolling early in the year and you'd see guys not practicing and saying, 'My ankle's killing me,' and 'My back's bothering me.' They weren't getting any work on the practice

field and they'd think they could play on Sunday. And of course the films show they couldn't. A lot of times it's a matter of how well we adapt to injuries. I don't think that many guys on this team are just going to gut it up and play hurt."

But Sullivan, when interviewed last fall, said, "Apart from the talent on the team, I think we have an exceptionally good grade of people. That's why, when the Patriots represent the AFC in the Super Bowl in January, I'd like you to say there was one guy who thought that in October."

"But Billy, they could be 7-7 when this comes out."

"Then the magazine ought to delete it."

BILLY SULLIVAN, 66, FOUNDED the Patriots and is president and majority stockholder. Chuck Sullivan, his 38-year-old son, is executive vice-president and chief legal and financial adviser. Pat Sullivan, his 29-year-old son, is assistant general manager and Billy, his 30-year-old son, is stadium manager. There are six Sullivans on the 11-person board of directors.

The Sullivans have given new meaning to nepotism.

"I don't see what is wrong with having the family involved," says Billy Sullivan. "The Maras do it. The Rooneys do it."

Sullivan wants the atmosphere to extend to the locker room. "I like to think this is one big family. Gino Cappelletti calls me 'Padrone.'"

The distinction between the Sullivans and the Patriots has blurred over the years, until one has become the other. Then-coach Fairbanks discovered this in 1977 when he settled a contract dispute with Howard Slusher, who was representing running back Horace Ivory, by flipping a coin. Fairbanks lost the flip and paid Ivory an extra \$5,000. Chuck Sullivan was soon knocking on Fairbanks' door.

"That's our family's money you're flipping with," Fairbanks was told. "You're gambling with our money."

Fairbanks had more control of the operation than any non-Sullivan ever, and the fact that some of the team's greatest successes came under him should not be considered coincidental. But even Fairbanks was not free of the Sullivans, who had veto power over contracts. The Sullivans vetoed Fairbanks' 11th-hour offer to John Hannah and Leon Gray in 1977 and the two all-pro offensive linemen subsequently held out for three games. When Fairbanks left the Patriots for

Colorado a year later, Hannah said it was because of Sullivan interference. Significantly, Fairbanks' successor as coach, Erhardt, was given none of Fairbanks' off-the-field authority. "I think that Ron was very happy to be just the coach," Billy Sullivan said early last season.

When Gray was traded out from under Erhardt in the summer of 1979, he was not happy to be just coach.

"I can name nine or 10 coaches who were against it," said Erhardt after being fired. "And we said so." Erhardt's fears were confirmed. Second-year tackle Dwight Wheeler reported with a bad leg and unprepared. When offensive line coach Jim Ringo was fired in December, his parting shot was, "Wheeler had just broken his leg a year before [the Gray trade]. It still wasn't right when they traded Gray. And let me tell you something, it still isn't right."

The trade of Gray, a team leader, rocked the team emotionally. While the players thought they were ripe to win a championship, GM Kilroy announced that with the first-round draft choice acquired he was building for the future. Nobody believed Kilroy wanted to trade Gray, either. Gray, the holdout, was one player Billy Sullivan avoided in the postgame clamor.

Hannah is still bitter over the trade. "It was pure revenge by the Sullivans. Plus, they saved \$82,000."

Sullivan parsimony is an idea that persists from the lean early years of the franchise and is a subject about which the family is sensitive. *The Boston Globe* wrote that Cardinal Cushing implied Sullivan was less than generous in supporting his charities and Sullivan is suing the *Globe* for libel.

That accusation is not altogether applicable today. The Sullivans have built a grass practice field, computerized the entire in-house operation, added a Nautilus facility and a film laboratory. Billy Sullivan was prominent in creation of the Jimmy Fund and set up a \$250,000 fund for Stingley.

But Erhardt will tell you that he was saddled with three or four unwanted players because the Sullivans weren't about to eat their contracts. Billy Sullivan will remind you that in his youth in Lowell, being rich meant having fruit on the table when nobody was sick. Patriot players have taken to coughing during negotiations.

"You know," Billy Sullivan likes to say, "Knut Rockne, God rest his soul, had a saying that could easily apply to these agents who think they

own our game: 'Egotism is an anesthesia to deaden the pain of stupidity.' That says so much.

"I've always felt that our game doesn't belong to the agents or the players or the owners. It belongs to the fans. Without them, we're nothing."

Sullivan's championing of the common man has led him to urge his players to get involved with the community, asking them to visit Boston schools during a period of racial tension.

"I've felt that sports teams are a quasi-civic enterprise," said Billy Sullivan. "I try to use football somewhat

beneficially to society. We're privileged in being considered part of the public domain. The opportunity to do something beneficial in private business is hardly ever presented to you, but in sports it is." Yet, Billy Sullivan has reaped a harvest of cynicism.

"The players resent going because they feel they're campaigning for Billy's daughters," said one former Patriot. Jeanne is an elected Boston school committee member and Kathleen is a

Leon Gray: Still missed



former member.

Billy Sullivan's cry of the common man is also viewed cynically because his late uncle Joe Sullivan, owner of one of the largest printing companies in Massachusetts, had high political and archdiocesan connections.

"I know the players feel we nickle-and-dime them," says Pat Sullivan, who has brought the candor and clear vision of youth to the front office. From his office at Schaefer Stadium he can look out on the players practicing below and see how wide is the gulf separating them from management.

"The thing is," he says, "ultimately different teams have different philosophies. One of our philosophies is that if a guy doesn't show up for training camp, then it's not the end of the world. Other teams feel if a guy doesn't show up it's a major catastrophe. We just don't feel that way."

"How would he feel," wondered Erhardt, "if he had to set up his office operation but didn't know when his workers would be available?"

Significantly, the Patriots probably have more holdouts than any team in the NFL. Contract disputes are as characteristic of the Patriots as late-season foldups, one theory being that the former begets the latter. "If there is resentment toward management, it can't help but limit a player's willingness to give of himself," said Ken Fishkin, attorney for several Patriots. "When players are hurt in the latter part of the season, this can mean the fine line between winning and losing."

LAST SUMMER THE TRAINING camp holdouts were Hasselbeck, nose tackle Ray Hamilton, linebacker Rod Shoate and running back Sam Cunningham, who signed before the third game after missing all of the 1980 season. In 1980, Pro Bowl cornerback Mike Haynes and defensive lineman Richard Bishop missed three games and Tom Owen missed nine. In 1979 safety Tim Fox missed a week of training camp. In 1978 running back Jess Phillips and linebacker Pete Barnes couldn't come to terms and were waived.

Contract disputes are nasty by nature, but with the Sullivans they can be downright ugly. Haynes was negotiating personally with Billy Sullivan and had almost come to an agreement. Haynes, a Born-Again Christian, told Sullivan, "I've prayed to the Lord that we can work this out." Sullivan broke off talks at the last moment and explained to the press, "Mike said the Lord told him to reject the offer. I

remember thinking that if the Lord was your agent, I'd rather deal with Howard Slusher." The embarrassed Haynes promptly hired Slusher.

Exactly what the Sullivans gain from their hard-nose negotiating policy is unclear because their payroll is fifth highest in the league. It may stem from habits acquired during the lean early years when they were forced to cut corners. Mike Holovak, an early head coach, used a bedsheet for a movie screen at a decrepit city facility rented for practices. There was the time the Patriots flew into Buffalo the day of an exhibition game and rented motel rooms for the afternoon. Holovak ordered the players to refrain from rumpling the bedsheets to gain the team a \$15-a-room discount. The squeeze was on again in 1975 after Billy Sullivan borrowed \$11 million to reacquire control of the team. Fairbanks was rebuked for awarding too many game balls to his players. But business has been good, and in 1980 the Patriots were sixth in ticket revenue.

Despite sagging attendance last season, there no longer is an imperative for penny-pinching, except to prove a point. "Nothing is gained by having holdouts and bad negotiations except that you establish that you're not going to give away the store," said Pat Sullivan. "On the overall scheme of things you let people know. We have a reputation now among the agents that this is not one of the most pleasant organizations to deal with."

In fact, agents may wish they had gone into another line after dealing with the Patriots. Tony Pennacchia, who represents gifted wide receiver Stanley Morgan and linebacker Steve King, assailed Pat Sullivan publicly for failing to return phone calls and show up for scheduled meetings. Pennacchia called Kilroy to complain:

"You can't do this to me."

"Look kid," said Kilroy, "if I can trade Leon Gray I can do whatever I want with this team."

Pennacchia elicited an apology from Pat Sullivan, but it hasn't eased his indignation. "You wouldn't believe how arrogant they can be," he said.

The Pennacchia-Pat Sullivan feud is lovey-dovey compared to the longstanding enmity between Slusher and Chuck Sullivan. In the scheme of Sullivan negotiations, Chuck Sullivan, a brilliant attorney with gold-plated banking connections, is the heavy hitter. When Slusher comes to town, it's high noon for Chuck Sullivan. Except, Sullivan points out, Slusher never

comes to town. "He asks us to fly to Tampa or Los Angeles or Seattle to meet him." Slusher explains that the Sullivans are difficult to find. "They're from a different planet," he says.

Slusher has gone to the mat with Chuck Sullivan over Hannah, Gray, Fox, Haynes, Bishop, Owen, Cunningham and Ivory. Slusher has had contract battles with several NFL managements, qualifying him as a connoisseur of the bargaining table. The Patriots, he will explain, give slow service but make up for it with big portions. "The Patriots end up giving you what you ask for and even more." Sullivan points out that Slusher did so well by Hannah and Fox they now negotiate for themselves.

S LUSHER BELIEVES THE SULLIVAN recalcitrance stems from Chuck's chairmanship of the NFL Management Council. "It's important for him to go back to his boys [i.e. management council] and sit around in his club chairs and say, 'We're not going to pay that,'" said Slusher. Sullivan points out that he engaged in contract disputes with Slusher before he was chairman of the management council.

Slusher seems to enjoy deflating the Sullivans. When Cunningham was holding out, Pat Sullivan telephoned Slusher in London. Sullivan read through the conditions of a long contract, point by point. Finally, he was finished.

"Would you run that by me again?" said Slusher.

"Again?"

"I didn't hear everything, I'm watching a track meet," said Slusher.

There is no trick to piquing the Sullivans, according to Slusher. "With the Sullivans, it's not even a business thing. They enjoy the limelight and want to keep things stirring. They like a fight for the sake of a fight."

Nothing could be further from the truth, Billy Sullivan responds. His feelings were made clear last summer in federal court in Los Angeles in response to Al Davis' allegation that the Patriots' negative vote on Oakland's move to L.A. stemmed from animosity over the Darryl Stingley incident.

"It is absolutely not true," Sullivan told the court. "Anyone in this room who knows me and my family could testify to the fact that hatred and animosity are not part of the fabric of the Sullivan family. I think love is more of a Sullivan family characteristic."

If so, it was being manifest in a strange way. Billy's daughter, Kathleen Sullivan Alioto, was in the court-

room. Her husband, Joseph Alioto, was the attorney representing Davis in his suit against the NFL.

"My daughter Kathleen will inherit one-sixth of this team," Billy said later. "In effect, Joe Alioto was suing himself." Chuck Sullivan conceded his sister had no control over her husband: "He's a hired gun." Sullivan said Alioto tried to blackmail him. Alioto said Sullivan perjured himself.

The sad irony is that even as Billy Sullivan alienates his players at the bargaining table, he wants them to love him as a father. When personal problems moved Russ Francis to retire before last season, Billy Sullivan sat down with him. "I like to feel this team is a family," he told Francis. "A good family shows character when there are problems. You have problems and I would feel very disturbed if you couldn't come to your father."

Filial affection is not forthcoming, however. A few days before the opening game Billy Sullivan gathered the players at practice and delivered his customary "We're a big family" speech. Later, Haynes stood at his locker, perhaps recalling Sullivan's needling of his religious expression, and said, "I think the word 'family' is used rather loosely around here." And Hannah, whose bitter negotiation in 1977 stripped away any veneer of sentimentality, said, "There are two different worlds here. These players don't consider the owners as part of the team at all. Mr. Sullivan, he's just part of the organization."

Chuck Sullivan realizes mistakes have been made, particularly in negotiating. He cites the quiet signing of Hannah to an extension last season as evidence of a new approach. "We probably could have wrapped things up more quickly with some players. Except for the Slusher clients."

Pat Sullivan wishes the Sullivans could stay out of negotiation. "It becomes a personal thing," he said. "What happens is that you're getting into these personal attacks on the family. I'd like to hire some guy who is a professional negotiator, tell him what we want and let him do it."

In the first week of 1982, before Penn State's Joe Paterno turned down the coaching job and SMU's Ron Meyer accepted, Billy Sullivan tried to hire USC's John Robinson. Robinson rejected Sullivan's offer, explained his attorney Edward Hookstratten, because "the Patriots were shopping Macy's bargain basement and we were thinking Bergdorf Goodman." As much as money, one NFL executive

thought Robinson's rejection was a question of control.

Robinson tried to save the Patriots' face by saying a "personal problem" influenced his decision.

In Boulder, Colorado, Chuck Fairbanks mused over his lunch. "If he's going to stick by his principle, he's going to have a hard time finding someone available," he told a friend.

When Fairbanks left the Patriots abruptly at the end of the 1978 season, Billy Sullivan sued him for breaking his contract. Colorado boosters paid \$200,000 to settle with Sullivan. Fairbanks told friends he left because "I couldn't take Billy anymore."

Sullivan's interest in Robinson, contracted to USC, struck some people as hypocritical. Sullivan's firing of Erhardt also struck some as hypocritical.

As late as December 21, Sullivan told Erhardt he hadn't decided on firing him and his staff. But on December 20 Sullivan had brunch with Colt owner Bob Irsay and GM Dick Szymanski and told them he was firing him. When newspapers reported on December 22 that Erhardt was to be fired, Sullivan told Erhardt it was so.

"We talked for 35 to 40 minutes," said Erhardt. "I didn't find out until 15 minutes into the conversation."

Earlier, Mike Haynes said he felt like "a piece of meat" after being forced to play against Buffalo December 13. Haynes had missed seven games after suffering a collapsed lung. His doctor advised him not to play. Patriot doctors said he was ready to play. Billy Sullivan called Haynes on his "piece of meat" remark. "It wasn't a very nice meeting," Haynes said.

Don Hasselbeck, who topped retired Russ Francis' best receiving marks, underwent knee surgery the week after the season ended. None of the Sullivans called or stopped to see him at the hospital in Boston. "Some family," Hasselbeck said.

Haynes and Hasselbeck, former holdouts, should have known better.

Billy Sullivan did not have a tranquil year. David Farrell, a *Boston Globe* political columnist, wrote an unflattering character analysis. Among other things, Farrell wrote that Sullivan revised history to suit his immediate needs, draped himself in his Irish-Catholic heritage and used his political connections to get a soft job as a public-relations man at the Naval Academy during World War II.

"The old adage," said Sullivan, who knows them all. "Kick a man when he's down." Billy Sullivan denies all these charges.

Sullivan pulled himself off the canvas and sued the *Globe* for \$5 million. The *Globe* stands by its story.

"Billy gets even," said Lee Sargent, a former Patriot executive vice-president ousted in the 1975 stock battle with the Sullivans. When Sargent was fired, he agreed to a limited severance pay on condition he could keep his parking space in the owners' lot at Schaefer Stadium. "I lost it the next year. They gave it to some guy from a bank where they probably borrowed money."

Sargent, whose father George was one of the 10 original Patriot owners and who died choking on a piece of meat in 1962, remembers the war for control of the team. He backed a group that ousted Billy Sullivan as president for a few months. Chuck Sullivan's clever maneuvering and loan gained control for his father.

"Billy's whole thing was that if you were against him you were against the Patriots," said Sargent, 39, now a coach at Tufts. "He thought of himself as the Patriots, even though then he was only one of several directors."

The worst came after it was over, after Billy Sullivan had gained control and had fired Sargent from the executive board. Sullivan and Sargent attended some of the same parties.

"I would walk past Billy and he would say in a loud voice, 'There's the traitor,'" said Sargent. "He would say it very loudly. It was terribly embarrassing. He kept that up for a year."

THE SULLIVAN FAMILY HAS COME to accept Billy rhetoric with a quiet bemusement.

"Bill hasn't changed much over the years," said Frank Sullivan, his youngest brother and president of a New Jersey insurance company. "He greets me with the same five or six words and the same friendly smile. And then he launches into one of his stories. He always has stories to tell. Sometimes you get impatient with him because you want to get on to the business at hand. Bill is persistent. The two things I think of when I think of Bill are his persistence and his smile."

NBC experienced a Sullivan filibuster during the New England-Miami game December 6. He was asked about the coaching situation during a break in the action. His answer, touching on slanted media coverage and other matters, served as the voice-over when the camera veered to the action on the field. Yes, he was smiling. ■

STEVE MARANTZ is a sports reporter for The Boston Globe.

A KILLING IN OMAHA

*Connie Kunzmann came out of Everly, Iowa,
to become an athletic pioneer, among the first to
play in the Women's Basketball League.
Then, at 24, warm, vibrant, brave, she was gone.*

BY IRA BERKOW

ILLUSTRATION
BY KINUKO Y. CRAFT





Craft

IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT SEASON FOR CONNIE Kunzmann, the poorest of her three in the professional Women's Basketball League. Connie, a 6-1, 160-pound 24-year-old with dark, frizzy hair and a spirited look in her green eyes, was a reserve forward on the Nebraska Wranglers—and her playing time had been decreasing in recent games. Normally, she would not have been concerned. She considered herself a slow starter and expected to improve as the 1980-81 season progressed. But suddenly, unexpectedly, her coach, Steve Kirk, had issued an ultimatum: Play better right now, or else.

Three days earlier, on February 2, 1981 after a game in San Francisco, Kirk had called her aside. "I don't know if you can play in this league anymore," he told her. "The girls are getting better. They may be passing you by. You're in grave danger of not going on another road trip."

The words hurt. Basketball meant a lot to Connie, and so did being a pioneer—one of the originals in the WBL, the only major professional team sports league for women in the country. Connie liked to relieve the pressures of her life with humor, and with hard, physical effort. Tonight, Thursday, February 5, with a game against the powerful Dallas Diamonds likely to determine her future as a pro athlete, was no time for fooling around—as when she and "Machine Gun" Molly Bolin, then a teammate, had bought Groucho Marx masks and planned to wear them during game introductions. Crowds were sparse and a little show biz couldn't hurt but, as Bolin put it, they had "chickened out." Tonight she was fighting for a position on a first-place team, a team with a chance for a championship. She was determined to be part of that. In her first two seasons, her team had gone to the WBL finals and lost both times.

With the Diamonds leading by 12 early in the fourth quarter, Kirk sent Connie in to guard Nancy Lieberman, perhaps the best woman ever to play the game. In two minutes, Connie drew a charging foul from Lieberman, stole a pass that led to a fastbreak basket, then hit three quick shots in a row. "She was killing us," Lieberman said.

Although Dallas withstood the comeback and went on to win 88-76, Connie finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds—her best game of the season. "Only one girl played well for us tonight," Kirk told his team in the locker room. "That was Connie."

Nancy Lieberman would recall, "Connie played the game of her life."

It would be the last game of her life.

CRAIG KUNZMANN, CONNIE'S OLDER BROTHER—he was 28—would remember Monday, February 9, vividly. It was a dark night, with no moon, about 9 o'clock. A light snow was falling, and the wind was picking up. A blizzard had been forecast. Craig, with his wife, Linda, beside him, was driving up a gravel farm road to his mother's house outside of Everly, Iowa, following a phone call from her. A police sergeant in Omaha had called her: Connie had been reported missing. The officer said that Connie had not been seen in three days, since she had returned to Omaha after the Dallas game.

"Nothing to worry about," Craig Kunzmann said to his wife.

"But it's not like her," said Linda. "Even when Connie visits friends out of town, she always lets someone know where she's going."

"Everyone wants to get away from something once in a while," he said. His words were meant to settle his wife—and himself.

Craig and Linda lived about five miles from his mother and stepfather—the father of Craig and Connie and their brother, Rick, had died a decade earlier—near Everly, a town of 700 in the northwest corner of Iowa, near the Minnesota and South Dakota borders, and about three hours' drive north of Omaha.

Connie had not shown up for two practices over the weekend, and her two roommates, both Wrangler teammates, said she had not been home since Friday night, when she was last seen celebrating at a neighborhood bar. Connie's yellow Mustang with its prestige Iowa license plates, KUNZ, was still parked in the bar's parking lot. What worried Craig was that Connie would never miss practice without telling anyone. She was dedicated and precise about her basketball. And Connie would never throw away \$50, the fine for missing practice.

Up ahead, through the falling snow, Craig and Linda could now make out the square yellow lighted window of his mother's farmhouse. Craig snapped off the headlights, turned off the motor and got out. The slamming of the car doors sounded loud in the still night.

"Connie's always been able to handle herself," said Craig, finally. "Hasn't she?"

CRAIG KUNZMANN HAD A RESTLESS NIGHT after he had been to his mother's house. He had spoken to coach Kirk and the Omaha police. Any time they had news, he told them, they should please call him first.

At about 6:30 the next morning, the phone rang beside his bed. He was still in a half-sleep. The window rattling in the blustery wind caught his attention. The windows had frosted over. A storm had hit in the night; schools would be closed; driving to work in the snowdrifts would be a chore.

"Coach Kirk here, down in Omaha," said the voice on the other end. "I'm sorry, but I've got bad news. Connie's dead. Some guy turned himself in. We're not quite sure of all the details. He says he killed her, that he hit her over the head with a tire iron and stabbed her. And then threw her body into the Missouri River."

"My God! Who did it?"

"Some guy named Lance Tibke."

IN OMAHA, THERE IS A NEIGHBORHOOD BAR CALLED Tiger Tom's, on the northwest side of town. Tom Lynch, the owner, sponsors numerous sports teams—particularly softball teams. It is not uncommon for bar owners to sponsor teams. It doesn't hurt business. Tom's place is noisy and crowded, "a good-news bar," as the locals call it. If someone is caught starting trouble, he is banned for life by Tom Lynch. No hard feelings. If Lynch sees the fellow in another bar, he'll buy him a drink. But under no circumstances will he be allowed back in Tiger Tom's.

On this Sunday afternoon, January 11—three and a half weeks before the Dallas game—the bar was packed with players from the Snoball Softball Tournament, sponsored by Lynch for the March of Dimes. Some 400 teams were involved. Members of one team—the one Lance and his father, Ed, played on—were celebrating their third-place finish at one table.

Also there were members of the Nebraska Wranglers, including Connie Kunzmann, who had been invited to present trophies and were helping to promote their games. "Connie was giving out free tickets for the Wrangler games, and she came by and sat down at our table," recalls Lance Tibke. "She was friendly. She was easy to talk to."



CONNIE KUNZMANN

Lance and Connie talked about sports, and Connie liked the fact that Lance and his father played on the same team. Lance also told her about his sister, a high school basketball player, who hoped to play in college. "Connie suggested that my sister give her a call some time, and maybe she could do something about her checking out Wayne State [which Connie attended]," says Lance.

Lance and Connie stayed until closing, 1 a.m. Then, according to Lance, they left together. He says they went back to Connie's room. Lance came home at dawn, Ed Tibke remembers, and he was concerned that Lance would be too tired to go to work. But Lance did.

Connie's roommates—who slept in a separate room—were in bed by 1 a.m. and didn't get up until after Lance would have left. "We didn't know anything much about Connie's private life," said one roommate, Genia Beasley. "She kept that to herself."

On her wall calendar, however, Connie noted under January 11: "Met Lance."

CONNIE RENE KUNZMANN WAS BORN ON JULY 3, 1956, in Spencer, Iowa, a few miles east of Everly, where her family moved when she was a few years old. She always had a fierce desire to compete, and to excel. When Connie was no more than nine, she and Craig were playing touch football with their family in the yard. Connie, running for a touchdown, looked back to see if anyone could catch her, and she slammed into a tree. She fell, her forehead cut and bleeding, but she began to *crawl* for the touchdown.

Her father died when she was 13, right around harvest time. The fields of corn and soybeans were left untended. But relatives and neighbors and church people came with their tractors and combines and home-baked goods and

pitched in. And Connie, though deeply saddened by the death of her father, came straight home from school to help out. This would prove a life-long pattern: fighting hurts and frustrations with hard physical work.

Afterward, she became involved in numerous school and community activities, from assistant to the Bible teacher at her Lutheran church, to 4-H, to playing the accordion—a love of her father—to playing basketball.

High school basketball is exceedingly popular in Iowa, as it is in many midwestern states. However, in Iowa, unlike in most states, girls' basketball happens to be at least on a par with boys' basketball, perhaps even of greater interest. The girls' state tournament at Des Moines often outdraws the boys' tournament.

And Everly is a household name in girls' basketball in the state. Along Highway 18, a wooden sign beside a cornfield greets the visitor: "Everly, Home of the Cattlefeeders. 1966 State Champions. State Contenders [and lists 10 of 12 years from 1961 through 1972]."

When Connie was still very young, her dad took her to girls' basketball games at the high school. Soon after he died, when she was only a seventh-grader, she tried out for the school team. One day she came home carrying a big sack in her arms, her pigtails swinging behind her and her eyes shining. She put the bag on the kitchen table and carefully pulled out an old red-and-white uniform with a pleated skirt. "Look, mom," she exclaimed, holding up the uniform. "I made the team!"

Connie moved up to the varsity in her freshman year and quickly became a starter. Her sophomore year her team made it to the state semifinals, and played before some 15,000 people in Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Des Moines. She was a guard her first three years in high school. In six-girl basketball, as it is played in Iowa, the guards only defend. They don't shoot. "She was a standout on defense," says Larry Johnson, her coach. "She was so quick and agile and strong. Sometimes she'd steal so many balls the other team couldn't get a shot off." At the end of her junior year, the Cattlefeeders needed shooting help, and Connie moved to forward. The next year, she averaged 34 points a game and was picked on several all-state teams.

By the time she graduated high school, she stood 6-1 and had the shoulders of a farmhand, mostly from baling hay in her spare time. "She was never ashamed of her height," says Johnson. "A lot of tall girls, you see them almost want to hide on the court. Not Connie. You never thought of Connie as gangly, but smooth and coordinated and confident."

Even when playing basketball against boys. "She looked at boys as being competitive," says her mother, Eleanor Hartmann. "She loved to play against them." She grew up competing against her brothers, and she found that playing against boys improved her game, made her stronger and quicker.

Connie received a basketball scholarship to Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska. Wayne is about 150 miles west of Everly and, like Connie's hometown, is a farming community.

Despite two serious injuries, Connie was a two-sport star at Wayne State, setting several school records. Once, she scored 40 points, and in another game she grabbed 25 rebounds. As a catcher and outfielder on the softball team, she once hit five home runs in a doubleheader.

Both sports took their toll, however. She broke an ankle in softball and twisted a knee playing basketball. As a senior, she tried to come back from the knee injury too soon, often playing in such pain that tears would come to

her eyes. "She used to tell the trainer, 'Wrap the knee tighter. I want to play,'" says Julie Brinkman, a star guard on the basketball team.

Connie, who majored in physical education, was an average student. Her social life was lively, though there were no steady boyfriends. Though this was similar to her social life in high school—at least on the surface—there was an important difference. In high school, she was accepted as an athlete *and* a woman. At Wayne State, it seemed, Nebraska men did not look at female athletes the way Iowa men did. Females were supposed to be unaggressive. Athletes were supposed to be aggressive. And Nebraska men apparently felt the two were mutually exclusive.

Connie spent a lot of time at Big Al's, a bar in Wayne frequented by the students, talking sports with the guys. Occasionally, she'd go over to a fraternity house and watch television. It was a lifestyle that would stay with her all her life. The dating was casual, and never for extended periods. Some of her girlfriends wondered if Connie might not have preferred something more formal with a man, something a bit more permanent. But she never talked much about it. If she was troubled, if she felt socially awkward, she dealt with it by throwing herself even more into sports.

In April 1978, shortly before she graduated, Connie received a letter inviting her to try out for the Iowa Cornets of the newly organized WBL. Until the moment the letter arrived, she hadn't even known the league existed. Nonetheless, thrilled by the prospect, she took a bus to Des Moines, tried out and was signed for \$7,500. It wasn't much—men in the National Basketball Association were *averaging* \$143,000 a year—but money wasn't a high priority for pioneers like Connie.

The WBL, which ceased operations after last season, was a ragtag league, run on a shoestring, though Iowa was one of its best-operated teams. There were 14 teams the second year, only eight last season. In the early going, the teams—including those with names like the Minnesota Fillies, the New Jersey Gems, the Chicago Hustle—often stayed in run-down hotels, the clerks insisting on cash up front. Sometimes the girls slept six in a room. Sometimes they played in high school gyms. Travel was often by bus and over long distances. Once, the Cornets got stuck in a snowstorm going from Ohio to Des Moines. The bus pulled up to Veterans Auditorium just minutes before game time. The girls had time only to put on their uniforms from the night before. The uniforms, which had been stored in the under-bin of the bus, were frozen. But the girls put them on. "We warmed up faster than our uniforms did," Connie later told a friend.

Crowds were often sparse, the loudest noise often the echo of a basketball. Paychecks were frequently late, with some teams falling a month or more behind.

"But we loved it—even if we complained a lot," says Tanya Crevier, a teammate of Connie on the Cornets. "We enjoyed being part of something that was important for women, that would add to our stature." The WBL seemed a natural, a new outlet that combined sports, entertainment and financial independence.

"Connie had that outgoing way and she expressed her pride in being a pro basketball player more than most of us," says Crevier. "She'd meet strangers and say, 'Hi, I'm Connie Kunzmann, I play for the Iowa Cornets.' I don't know how, but she could do it without being at all embarrassed."

Wherever Connie went, whether it was Broadway or Bourbon Street, she took the neighborliness of Main Street, Everly, with her. "Sometimes," says Molly Bolin, "she'd

give out a stack of free tickets. At the game, she'd have an entire section rooting for her. It was a panic."

Though the girls shared camaraderie and a sense of pioneering, there were still the conflicts associated with team sports. Some girls thought others shouldn't be playing as much, or were shooting too much. "I remember one night we went to see Connie play," says Eleanor Hartmann. "She was very upset, and she cried after the game. She hadn't played that much, she and some of the other girls felt the coach was playing favorites, and she hadn't gotten paid."

Connie was having another problem, something new in her experience. For the first time in her basketball career, she was spending the crucial parts of games on the bench. For the first time, she had to question her basketball ability.

Connie cared deeply about the game. She had made herself into a first-rate player. Steve Kirk, who coached her with the Cornets and Wranglers, says that if you asked Connie to practice 50 layups, she'd do 100. During the summer, she'd play against men in the YMCA and good pickup leagues. She played for hours every day. And she undertook a weight-lifting program to increase her strength so she could rebound better.

In games, wearing high-top Adidas and knee pads, she hustled for loose balls. She mixed it up under the backboards. She'd get hurt, shake it off, continue on. Once, she had a black eye for a month. She was not a very good jumper, but she learned how to position her body with skillful use of elbows and hips. She was not a particularly versatile shooter, but she took only shots she was confident of making—and was the Cornets' top percentage shooter. Her enthusiasm, though, was her most attractive quality. When she was on the bench, she didn't sulk. "When there was a timeout," recalls Crevier, "Connie was the first one up, clapping, to greet the starting team."

Connie finished her first pro season with an 11.0 scoring average—fourth best on the team—and was third in rebounding and first in steals. Her second year she won the team Hustle Award, averaging 11 points and 11 rebounds. While with the Cornets, she set the league single-game record for steals with 11.

After the second season, the Cornets folded. Kirk was hired by the Nebraska Wranglers, and he brought Connie along. "I knew I could count on her," he says. "She knew my system and she was a great morale booster for the team."

LANCE EDWARD TIBKE HAD LITTLE OF Connie Kunzmann's drive or sense of purpose.

He was 5-10—three inches shorter than Connie—but a husky 210 pounds, with a broad chest and a 17-inch neck. His straight blond hair fell in bangs across his forehead. His blue eyes and light eyelashes conveyed a kind of innocence. For all of his 25 years, he had lived with his family in a pleasant house on a tree-shaded street in Omaha. The oldest of nine children, he had been away from home only twice, once to visit an aunt in California for two weeks, and then to college, at Dana, in nearby Blair, Nebraska. He had never been east of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

He was shy with girls. When he and his friends went to a bar, he would sit quietly. Girls seemed intrigued by his boyish good looks, or perhaps by his quietness. But when he got up to dance, it was invariably the girl who had asked him.

Like most of his friends, he loved sports. Sports provided

a common ground he was comfortable with. When one of his brothers had a problem in school, for example, Lance would say, "Let's go bowling." It was a way of communicating feeling. Lance played outfield on one of the better slow-pitch softball teams in Omaha. His father was the team's pitcher. Lance was a good line-drive hitter and, though he ran with a duck waddle, he ran fast. He had once been clocked at 4.6 in the 40-yard dash.

As a sophomore at Benson High School, he played wide receiver on the junior varsity, but decided not to go out for the varsity the following year. "I felt the guys on the varsity were better, that I couldn't match up to them," Lance explained politely, sitting in a narrow interview room in the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln, dressed in a pressed white T-shirt, tan chinos and clean white basketball sneakers. "Most of my friends were younger than I was, and I wasn't sure I could compete with the older guys."

In his senior year, Lance did try out for the team, but he was cut. His coach told him that he couldn't pass over players who had stayed with the program for one who hadn't.

For a year after he graduated from high school in 1974, Lance drove a forklift in a beef-packing plant. Then he and his brother, Clay, a year younger and his good friend, entered Dana to major in law enforcement. Lance wanted to become a state-highway law officer. The boys chose Dana because of its criminal justice program, because it was close to home, and because it had a Lutheran affiliation.

After his frustrating experiences in high school, Lance felt he had something to prove—that he could play football. So he went out for the team at Dana. Because of his size and quickness, he was made a linebacker.

Lance played sparingly, with few observers agreeing why this was so. The Dana coach, Gary SeEVERS, remembers Lance as "a nice kid, quick feet, but inexperienced." Clay says Lance never got a fair chance. "It was a pretty bad team," Clay says. "They didn't want Lance hitting as hard as he did in practice. They were afraid one of their seniors might be injured."

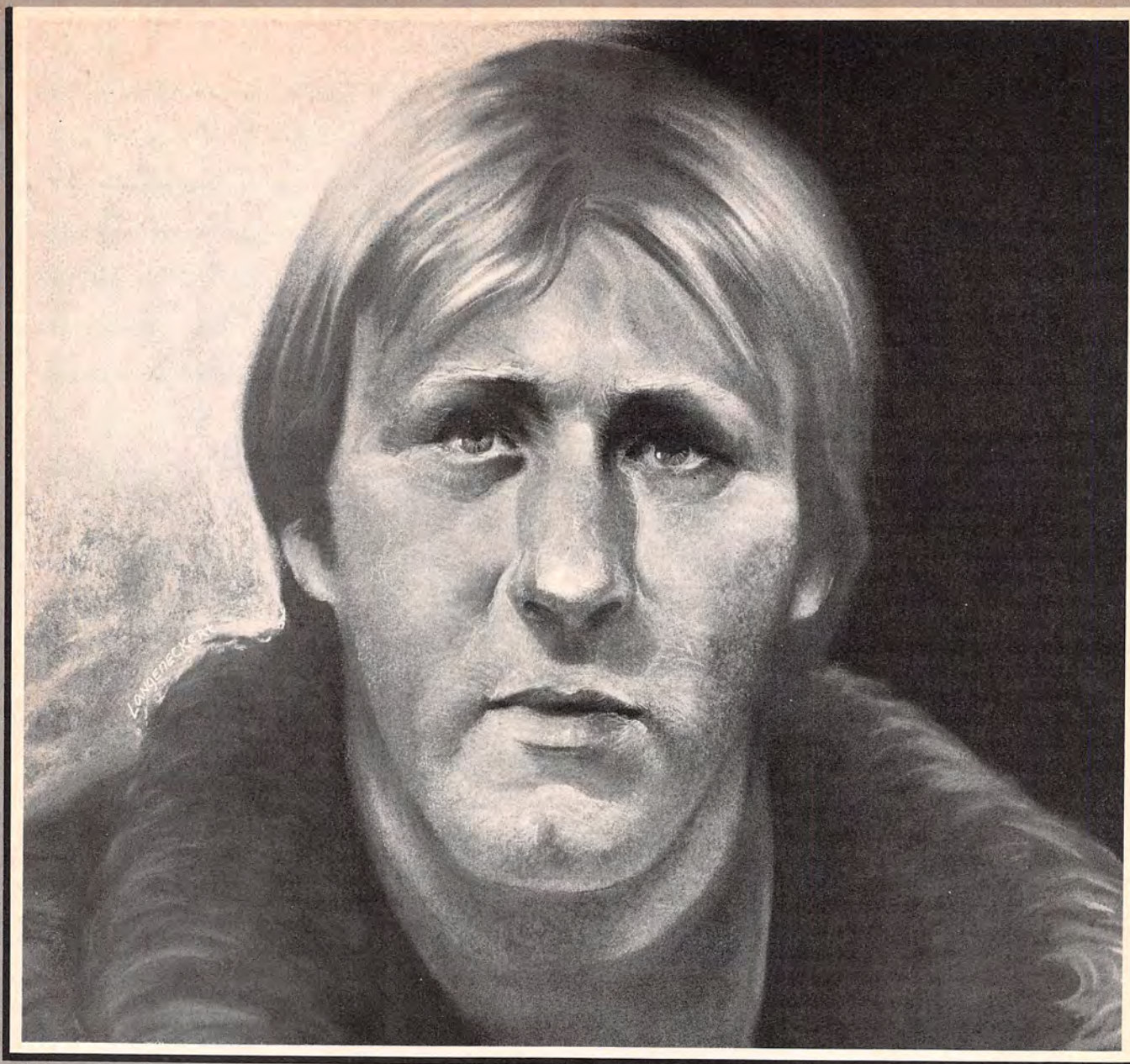
Lance's opinion? "I played pretty well, I thought, but I've never been too aggressive." And then, without a touch of irony, sitting in a prison interview room, he added, "I was just not one of those guys who liked to hurt people. I didn't have the killer instinct."

On the one hand, Lance seemed too aggressive; yet, on the other, not aggressive enough. Lance, as events would later prove, was an enigma.

He liked football, but not enough to attend classes. He flunked out of Dana midway through his second year. "He just didn't want it bad enough to work hard at it," says his father. "I told him, 'Well, don't waste anyone's time.'" Then came an assortment of odd jobs and long periods of sitting around the house, playing softball and wondering where his life was going. He became engaged to a girl named Linda, who insisted he get a decent job and move out of his parents' house.

"Lance was always so nice, so even-tempered, but too passive about his life," Linda says. She broke off the engagement, and it hurt Lance.

Eventually, he got a job with the Omaha Public Power District nuclear plant in nearby Fort Calhoun, Nebraska. "It was okay," says Lance, "but after nearly two years, I had hoped to get something else in the District, like construction, or doing what my dad did." Ed Tibke was a utilities lineman for Omaha Public Power, a crew foreman



LANCE TIBKE

on a trouble-shooting rig. He was 46 years old, blond and broad-chested like his son. As they played together on softball, basketball and volleyball teams, Ed Tibke would have liked to have worked with his oldest son. "Lance and I," he says, "were more like friends than father and son."

At home, Lance followed closely his favorite football team, the Dallas Cowboys. "I liked them because they always won when you wanted them to," he says. "They always seemed to score in the last seconds to win a game dramatically." He and several of his friends were competitive about their favorite football teams. When Dallas won, Lance would call his friends and tease them. "Say, I wasn't able to get to the television. Who won the Dallas game?" It was a running joke. And when Dallas lost, they would call him. He wouldn't answer the phone. He'd tell Clay, "Say I'm in the shower."

He didn't like to have it rubbed in. In fact, one of the few

times he had a fight, or lost his temper, was over a football game. He and Clay and some friends were playing in the snow in a friend's backyard with a miniature football. Lance, who was proud of his speed, got beat for a touchdown by Clay, who was quite a bit slower. Clay came back and shoved the little football in Lance's face. Lance became enraged, and jumped on Clay. They threw punches. The friends broke it up quickly. At home, Ed Tibke smacked both his sons on the head. "I don't want to ever see either of you two fighting again," he said.

BY HER THIRD YEAR IN THE STRUGGLING pro league, Connie was no longer a starry-eyed youngster just out of college. She had seen most of the major cities in America—even if only for short periods of time. And she had been confronted with some of the hard business realities of life. She

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK LANGENECKERT

shared some of these concerns in letters to Bob Christensen. Christensen was a bartender at Tiger Tom's whom Connie dated occasionally for about three months before her death. "Connie," says Christensen, "was the most upbeat person I have ever known. She was a pro athlete and kind of a celebrity. And it impressed me at first, quite a bit. But she never acted stuck-up. She made you feel at ease. And nothing seemed to put her down—that's why her letters surprised me so much."

On January 22, 1981, Connie wrote to Christensen. She made a few jokes at the beginning of the letter, then confessed she was low because of the poor state of affairs of the league and the problems she was having as a player. "I'm really sick and tired of being kept in suspense," she wrote. "Getting walked on, told lies to, not getting paid on time and putting up with all this shit that is being thrown at us. I guess I wouldn't be here if I didn't want to. But I'm really confused as to what I want. I want too much or expect too much from myself and my job."

To sustain a positive outlook, Connie Kunzmann relied on uplifting maxims. She would find such aphorisms in her casual reading—from the *Iowa Farm Bureau Spokesman* to the Bible to the *National Enquirer* to the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson. She wrote them down carefully on yellow legal pads. One was: "Be your own soul, Learn to live, And if Some thwart you, Take no heed, If Some hate you, Have no care; Sing your song, Dream your Dream, Hope your Hope and Pray your Prayer."

Late in January, just a few weeks before Connie's death, the Wranglers still hadn't been paid and two of her friends, one her roommate, Genia Beasley, were expected to be traded. Connie again wrote to Christensen: "Are you a good psychiatrist, Bob? I really need someone to talk to. If it hadn't been so late, I would have called. I really can't cope right now. Everyone here [she was in her apartment in Omaha, he was in Ohio on personal business] is getting drunk and I really don't care about tomorrow. Our whole house is crying."

"I'm sure we can't have no-cut, no-trade contracts and we know anyone can go any time. It hurts so bad when we all get along so well. Maybe what bothers me more than anything is trying to say goodbye to someone and possibly losing touch. It's happened before. Leaving home for the first time, leaving all my friends at college my senior year, moving three more times since then, and now this. I really feel for Genia."

As it turned out, Genia and the other player, Peggy Pope, were not traded away, and Connie seemed to be in better spirits the next day. In a letter dated January 27, she wrote to Christensen: "Today, I'm the bearer of good tidings. Things changed overnight. Things are back to normal."

Except for one thing: Connie was in jeopardy of not making the traveling squad. "It would have been a blow if she was dropped," says Christensen. "It was a real pride thing with her."

But she was battling. "A teammate gave me a cheap shot to the nose in practice," she wrote. "So practice ended kind of abruptly. It swelled, but I hope it's not broken. Wish I could've decked her."

"It's about 12 midnight now. Why is life always such a challenge? We are always being tested, I guess. Now I feel like getting drunk. And there isn't anyone to talk to. You aren't here. Sure could use a shoulder. Besides, the bars will be closed by the time I get cleaned up."

She was coming of age and her moods now seemed to fluctuate more than ever. "Met a deaf guy in a bar," she

wrote with delight, "and we wrote conversations to each other."

Connie also remained close to her mother, writing calling several times a week. Her mother worried about her. "I always told Connie," says Eleanor Hartmann, "that she should be careful of the big city. You don't know what kind of people you'll be associating with. In a small town you know everybody. And Connie said, 'Mom, I only know good people.'"

CONNIE ARRIVED HOME IN OMAHA EARLY Friday evening, February 6. She tossed her duffel bag on the bed and never got around to emptying it. She slipped out of the dark suit and white blouse she had worn on the plane, and put on a flannel shirt, blue jeans and hiking boots, clothes that a one-time farm girl would be most comfortable in. A touch of eye shadow, two necklaces—one with a cross and one with a gold basketball—gold hoop earrings, her green satin jacket with "Connie" scripted on the left front and "Towson Cornets" on the back. No lipstick, no blush. Connie Kunzmann was looking forward to a well-deserved evening in the town.

She called a few girlfriends and Bob Christensen. They made a tentative date for that night at Tiger Tom's. "She was excited about having played well against Dallas," says Christensen. "She was anxious to celebrate. Even though the team had lost, it was still in first place, and now Connie felt she was going to help the team win the championship. That was important to her."

It was about nine when Connie went into the living room of the small three-bedroom house she shared with Genia Beasley and Holly Warlick. Holly and another friend were playing cards. Genia was watching television. Dishes from the spaghetti dinner that Genia prepared were still lying around. Connie always had too many other interests to learn to cook. The girls were casual about their housekeeping chores. "Connie had had a few beers," recalls Genia, "and she was feeling good—maybe a little high. She was mostly a social drinker—but that night she had a few beers extra. She was happy. She asked us if we wanted to go to Tiger Tom's with her. None of the rest of us felt like going, so Connie drove there alone. It didn't matter. She always met people and struck up conversations. When I first met her, I thought, no one is that friendly. But she was. When she left the house, she said, 'I'm going out to have a good time.' Those were her parting words."

That night, Lance Tibke and his father, mother and one of his sisters went to a family steak restaurant, Sizzler, for dinner. There, Ed Tibke broke the good news. Clay, who had been in the army in Germany for three years, was returning home to stay in a few days. "Lance was excited about it," says Ed Tibke. "We all were. It meant the family was going to be together again."

After dinner, Lance had a date with his new fiancée, Debbie. They had gotten engaged only a few weeks before after a short courtship. They went to a movie and then Lance dropped her off at home at about 10:30. She was taking law courses at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and had to be up early.

On the way home, Lance drove past Tiger Tom's, saw the cars of some of his friends parked in the lot and decided to stop in and have a few beers.

One of the first people he saw was Connie. "Where've you been?" she asked. "Haven't seen you around."

"Been working the night shift," Lance said.

In fact, despite the familiarity, this was only the second

me they had ever had any contact. It was not that unusual, however, for Connie to presume a closeness to the surprise of the other party. Bob Christensen, for example, was quite surprised—though certainly not displeased—to have received such open letters from Connie after only a few dates. After she and Lance had gotten together four weeks earlier, neither had called the other. Lance, recently engaged, did not want to further complicate his life. Connie, who didn't know Lance was engaged, had been on the road with the Wranglers. Besides that, she seemed to have other male interests—such as Christensen—who were more important to her. But she and Lance drank for a while together. Lance says he had “about eight Coors Lights”; Connie drank several schooners of Yukon Jack. They played a video game together, then went to mingle with others.

A few times that night, Connie had to go outside for a breath of fresh air. She was ill from a combination of excitement over her performance in Dallas, the smoke in the bar, the drinks and jet lag. But she returned, and she seemed to be enjoying herself.

At 1 a.m., Tiger Tom's closed. In the parking lot, some of Connie's girlfriends asked her if she wanted to join them for breakfast. She turned them down, said she was going back into the bar to say goodnight to Christensen. That was the last time any of them would see her alive.

Inside, Christensen was talking to another girl, and he indicated to Connie that she wasn't in his plans for the evening. According to Christensen, Connie didn't seem to be upset. “But,” he added, “she was pretty good at hiding her feelings.” That was the last time Christensen saw her alive.

By now, Lance Tibke was gone. He had driven one of his friends, Jeff Knudsen, home in the Tibke family's 1975 red Ford pickup truck. The family favored a pickup to haul their sports equipment around—to softball games or for the girls' Little League softball team that Ed Tibke coached, with Lance's assistance.

“Lance was in a good mood that night,” recalls Knudsen, who lived about five blocks from the Tibkes. “He didn't seem troubled. He dropped me off and I figured he was going home.”

He wasn't. Lance drove back to Tiger Tom's. “A few of my friends had been drinking fairly heavily,” he says. “I thought they might need some help.”

When he wheeled into the parking lot, he saw Connie coming out of the bar. “I asked her where she was going,” Tibke recalls. “She said to breakfast with some girlfriends. A lot of the crowd goes to breakfast when Tiger's closes. I asked her if she wanted me to take her there. She said sure, that she wasn't feeling too good and didn't want to drive.

“But I drove away, and we forgot about breakfast.”

On the surface, they seemed a fairly unlikely couple. He was generally shy, she very outgoing. She was an overachiever, he an underachiever. She left home to seek her fortune, he stayed.

“The biggest difference between us,” Tibke says, “was that Connie seemed to know what she was doing and what she wanted. It was like she had been around—more so than me. I had never been with a girl like that.”

There were also similarities: roughly the same age; same church background—Lutheran (neither was now a regular churchgoer); close family ties; numerous friends; and their love of sports.

Lance wore a blue sweatshirt with a hood, a blue-and-white sweater, jeans and brown earth shoes. There was a pen knife in the ashtray—a gift to Lance from a friend for

standing up at the latter's wedding—and a tire iron that was always kept under the driver's seat.

The couple drove north down 72nd Street and turned right at Hartman Avenue, passing vacant areas covered with snow. Three minutes after leaving Tiger Tom's, Lance turned left into a gravel road beside the Springwell Cemetery, and drove a short distance to a knoll that is occasionally used as a lover's lane. In the distance were the lights of the streets and homes of northwest Omaha.

Lance says he took Connie there for sexual reasons, then backed off. Guilt, he says. He was engaged to another woman. Connie became persistent, and Lance maintains he had difficulty fending her off. “She was big—taller than me—and very strong,” he has explained. “You could feel the strength in her hands.”

Lance now says he draws a blank about what exactly happened next. Certainly, there was a struggle. Tibke's head hit the roof of the truck. Hard. He remembers only that he was very, very mad—as if all the frustrations in his life were rising up at once and spilling over. “I couldn't control it,” he says. “I began to pound her and pound her and pound her. She said, ‘Stop it, stop it. Please, don't.’ But I couldn't stop. I don't know why. She was a nice girl. I didn't have anything against her.”

All her life, when challenged, Connie Kunzmann fought back with courage. Nearly a year later, Lance Tibke would still bear the pinch bruises and bite marks on his arms and legs from Connie's struggle in the last moments of her young life.

Four days later, before dawn, Lance gave his confession to Sgt. Richard Vacek in Omaha police headquarters. Lance had been questioned through the night. He was an emotional wreck. “His eyes were glazed, he hadn't slept all night and the grilling and realization of what he had done seemed to put him into a daze,” Sgt. Vacek says.

Sgt. Vacek: How did you get into a fight there, Lance?

Lance Tibke: She didn't want to leave. So she hit me and I pushed her back to the other side of the truck and then she came at me again.

Q: What did you do then?

A: I then pulled out a pocket knife.

Q: What did you do with it?

A: I just now, I started sticking her with it.

Q: Do you know how many times you stuck her?

A: No, it happened too fast.

Q: What happened then?

A: I then . . . a tire iron [from under] the seat.

Q: Did you hit her with the tire iron?

A: I hit her in the head.

Q: How many times?

A: Five or six times.

Q: Did she become unconscious?

A: Yes.

Q: Was she dead then?

A: I believe so.

Then, Lance took Connie's blood-stained Iowa Cornets jacket with her wallet and identification—the jacket was either off before the murder or Lance now took it off—and buried it in the cemetery ground. Then he drove the truck to Dodge Park along the Missouri River, some 15 minutes from Springwell Cemetery.

Q: What did you do next?

A: I backed the truck down the boat ramp. Down by the water. Got out of the truck, went over to the other side. Pulled her out, drug her into the water.

Dragging Connie's body, Lance waded out in the dark to where the water was about waist high. “Then the currents

just took her out of my arms, and she floated away," Lance told Sgt. Vacek. "It was like a dream."

Because the boat ramp was icy from the cold and snow on the ground, Lance was unable to drive his truck up the ramp. At about 5 a.m., he called his mother from a bar in North Omaha. Somebody, he told her, had stolen his truck. She drove out to get him.

That weekend, he filed a report for a stolen vehicle. The following day, when Lance arrived home from work, his father asked what had happened to the truck. Lance said two men had beaten him up and stolen it. He had bruises on his face and body and a huge welt on his head. Obviously, he had been in some kind of fight. He said that his clothes—his jeans and shoes and socks—were sopping wet because he was rolling around in the snow while fighting. On Sunday, it was learned that Connie Kunzmann was missing. The next day, Jeff Knudsen called one of Lance's sisters to tell her he thought that the theft of Lance's truck might have something to do with the disappearance of Connie. For some reason, Knudsen felt that the story of the stolen truck was phony—never considering, however, that Lance might actually be involved. Ed Tibke then asked his son about the story.

Lance admitted that he had been with Connie that night. "I think that it's best that you tell the truth, son," Ed Tibke said.

"I want to, dad. I don't think I could live through another weekend like this."

"I'm behind you, Lance. We could talk to a lawyer. Or we can go directly to the police."

"Dad, I think we'd better go to the police. It was bad."

ON THE DAY THAT LANCE CONFESSED, A RIVER search for Connie Kunzmann's body was thwarted by near-blizzard conditions and huge ice floes in the area of the murder, where the river was a quarter-mile wide. Patrol boats couldn't navigate and the water was too cold to send down scuba divers. They would have to wait.

As February came to an end, the river began to thaw. Patrol boats traveled as far as 30 miles downstream looking for the body. They found nothing.

Seven weeks after the murder, on the morning of March 28, two young boys fishing along the banks of the Missouri near Dodge Park saw a body snagged in the limbs of a large tree that had fallen into the river. It was Connie Kunzmann.

Lance Edward Tibke was sentenced to 40 years for second-degree murder "without premeditation." Judge Paul Hickman took into consideration that Lance had no prior record and the large number of character witnesses who pleaded for mercy.

THEY MAKE REFERENCE TO EMOTIONS OF *which we tend to be unaware. . . . It forced upon us a fresh realization that behind the contained and orderly lives we lead as members of the respectable middle-class, there's a terrible human capacity that may one day overwhelm any of us.*"

—DIANA TRILLING, on the murder of Dr. Herman Tarnower by Jean Harris

There are those who dispute Lance Tibke's version of what happened on the last day of Connie Kunzmann's life. Sgt. Vacek, for example, believes Lance was the sexual aggressor, that he became enraged when Connie was too tired, too intoxicated or too disinterested to respond. The *why*, as Trilling suggests, lies beyond our ability to touch it.

How does one explain Lance Tibke's police record?

6/29/78—Following too close—Fine \$10.

9/11/78—Following too close—Canceled.

2/10/81—Murder, second degree.

"I wish we knew why," says Judge Hickman. "There are things that happen that seem to have no rhyme or reason."

"Connie," says Eleanor Hartmann, "died so unlike she lived. She made people happy. She never wrote a letter or postcard without drawing that little smiley face on the bottom. That was her trademark. It is impossible for me to believe that she could make anybody so mad that he'd want to do what he did to her."

Ed Tibke, when he talks about it, has to grip himself. He is a hard-working, family-dedicated man, and his eyes redden when he speaks of his oldest son, his "friend." Between sentences, he unconsciously exhales deeply, as though that will somehow expunge the nightmare he has lived for the last year.

"I still can't believe it happened," he says. "I don't know why. He told me, 'Dad, it was all like a dream. Suddenly she was not breathing anymore. If there was anything I could do to bring her back to life, I would have done it. But there wasn't.'"

"The prison psychologist told me that there is a breaking point and, when it is reached, we snap, we erupt in rage. He said we are all capable of it. Why it happened to Lance that he should do what he did is something I don't think even Lance knows."

IT WAS A COOL, BREEZY DAY LAST NOVEMBER, BUT the sun shone brightly in Everly, Iowa. Plowed fields stretched in the distance. A tractor, silhouetted against the clear blue of the sky, crawled along the horizon.

"The land is flat now," said Eleanor Hartmann, "but in the summer, corn gets about 10, 11 feet tall, and then there are the wide stretches of green soybean fields. It's beautiful."

She and her husband, Cliff, were driving a visitor around Everly, showing him where Connie grew up, the church, Main Street, the house they lived in after Connie's father died and they had to leave the farm, the cemetery where she is buried. "I've got the stone ready to be put up," Eleanor said. "But I'm still waiting to get the smiley face engraved on the bottom of it."

Cliff said, "We told the man, 'We want a round face with slits for eyes. Not round eyes.' He said, 'Slits for eyes?' Eleanor had to draw it for him." They laughed softly.

Cliff, wearing a cap that read "Land O'Lakes" on the front, pulled up to the Everly High School. He and Eleanor, who drew on a white silk head scarf to keep her hair from blowing in the wind, and the visitor got out. They walked on the brown grass expanse in front of the school to a thin, newly planted tree, no bigger than a long stick. It hardly cast a shadow.

"Connie's classmates donated the tree," said Eleanor. "It's a red maple." She smiled. "It doesn't look like much more than a twig. But it's tall and straight and lovely as Connie."

"Hope it has leaves in the spring," said Cliff.

"I hope so, too," said Eleanor.

She breathed deeply, and turned up the collar of her jacket against the wind. Quietly, the three walked back to the car. ■

IRA BERKOW is a sports columnist and feature writer for The New York Times.

Numbers

NBA PIPELINES

North Carolina and UCLA lead all schools when it comes to producing talent for the National Basketball Association, each having nine alumni in the NBA. Below is a list of the leading colleges in providing NBA players. All information is based on active and injured players listed on this season's opening-day rosters. If a player went to two or more schools, the last college attended before entering the pros is listed.

BIG 10		Georgia	0	Duke	3	Colorado	2
Indiana	8	Florida	0	Clemson	2	Kansas State	2
Minnesota	5			Virginia	2	Missouri	1
Michigan	4	Total	20	Wake Forest	1	Nebraska	0
Iowa	4	Per-School Average	2.0	Georgia Tech	0	Oklahoma State	0
Ohio State	3	PAC-10				Iowa State	0
Michigan State	3	UCLA	9	Total	26		
Purdue	2	Arizona State	6	Per-School Average	3.25	Total	11
Illinois	1	Washington	4	BIG EAST		Per-School Average	1.38
Northwestern	1	Oregon State	4	St. John's	3	OTHER	
Wisconsin	1	Washington State	3	Villanova	3	LEADERS	
		USC	3	Georgetown	2	South Carolina	6
Total	32	Stanford	2	Syracuse	2	Notre Dame	6
Per-School Average	3.2	Oregon	2	Providence	1	Detroit	5
SOUTHEASTERN		Arizona	1	Connecticut	0	DePaul	4
Kentucky	4	California	0	Boston College	0	Nevada-Las Vegas	4
Tennessee	4			Seton Hall	0	Utah	4
Alabama	3	Total	34			San Francisco	4
LSU	3	Per-School Average	3.4	Total	11	Rutgers	4
Auburn	2	ATLANTIC COAST		Per-School Average	1.38	Central Michigan	3
Vanderbilt	2	North Carolina	9	BIG 8		Marquette	3
Mississippi State	1	Maryland	6	Kansas	4	Houston	3
Mississippi	1	North Carolina State	3	Oklahoma	2	Louisville	3

KEY PLAYS: UPDATED

By totaling certain positive categories [touchdown passes, interceptions (I), fumble recoveries (FR) and sacks] and then subtracting the total of certain negative categories [touchdown passes allowed (TDPA), interceptions thrown (IT), fumbles lost (FL) and sacks permitted (SP)], a statistic can be produced that fairly accurately reflects a team's production. This season the Giants were the only team with a negative rating to make the playoffs. Also noteworthy is the improved ratings from last season of 1981's three most improved teams: the 49ers (-7 to +34), the Bengals (+2 to +26) and the Jets (-33 to +52).

	TD Passes	I	FR	Sacks	Positive Rating	TDPA	IT	FL	SP	Negative Rating	Total Rating	Team's Record
AFC EAST												
Miami	18	18	15	38	+ 89	23	21	10	30	- 84	+ 5	11-4-1
NY Jets	26	21	15	66	+128	15	14	17	30	- 76	+52	10-5-1
Buffalo	25	19	17	47	+108	21	20	18	16	- 75	+33	10-6
Baltimore	21	16	14	13	+ 64	37	23	14	37	-111	-47	2-14
New England	17	16	17	20	+ 70	18	34	16	45	-113	-43	2-14
AFC CENTRAL												
Cincinnati	30	19	18	42	+109	24	12	12	35	- 83	+26	12-4
Pittsburgh	25	30	16	40	+111	22	19	22	27	- 90	+21	8-8
Houston	21	18	13	33	+ 85	22	23	21	40	-106	-21	7-9
Cleveland	21	15	20	29	+ 85	28	27	26	40	-121	-36	5-11
AFC WEST												
San Diego	34	23	18	47	+122	22	18	21	19	- 80	+42	10-6
Denver	27	23	23	36	+109	13	21	18	61	-113	- 4	10-6
Kansas City	12	26	21	27	+ 86	16	22	24	37	- 99	-13	9-7
Oakland	18	13	18	52	+101	24	28	20	53	-125	-24	7-9
Seattle	21	21	27	36	+105	25	15	23	37	-100	+ 5	6-10
NFC EAST												
Dallas	24	37	16	42	+119	17	15	20	31	- 83	+36	12-4
Philadelphia	25	26	21	40	+112	12	22	17	22	- 73	+39	10-6
NY Giants	16	17	17	44	+ 94	14	20	16	47	- 97	- 3	9-7
Washington	19	24	15	32	+ 90	21	22	19	30	- 92	- 2	8-8
St. Louis	15	21	17	32	+ 85	29	24	20	48	-121	-36	7-9
NFC CENTRAL												
Tampa Bay	20	32	14	23	+ 89	10	14	14	19	- 57	+32	9-7
Detroit	18	24	15	47	+104	22	23	20	44	-109	- 5	8-8
Green Bay	24	30	24	36	+114	18	24	17	52	-111	+ 3	8-8
Minnesota	27	16	19	33	+ 95	26	29	21	29	-105	-10	7-9
Chicago	14	18	22	31	+ 85	23	23	17	35	- 98	-13	6-10
NFC WEST												
San Francisco	20	27	21	36	+104	16	13	12	29	- 70	+34	13-3
Atlanta	30	25	21	29	+105	30	24	17	37	-108	- 3	7-9
Los Angeles	15	17	16	43	+ 91	17	32	15	50	-114	-23	6-10
New Orleans	8	17	17	27	+ 69	26	27	20	41	-114	-45	4-12

MORE THAN THEIR SHARE

Here are the 10 best RBI and victory totals since 1971 as a percentage of the team's totals. In parentheses are the player's total, then the team's total.

RBI PERCENTAGE

AL			
1. Dick Allen, Chi. 1972	.200	(113-566)	
2. Harmon Killebrew, Minn. 1971	.182	(119-654)	
3. Eddie Murray, Balt. 1981	.182	(78-429)	
4. George Scott, Milw. 1972	.178	(88-493)	
5. Lee May, Balt. 1976	.176	(109-619)	
6. Jim Rice, Bost. 1978	.175	(139-796)	
7. John Mayberry, KC 1972	.172	(100-580)	
8. Bobby Murcer, NY 1972	.172	(96-557)	
9. Jeff Burroughs, Tex. 1974	.171	(118-690)	
10. Bobby Bonds, Cal. 1977	.170	(115-675)	

NL			
1. Nate Colbert, SD 1972	.227	(111-488)	
2. Bill Buckner, Chi. 1981	.203	(75-370)	
3. Dave Winfield, SD 1979	.196	(118-603)	
4. George Foster, Cin. 1981	.194	(90-464)	
5. George Foster, Cin. 1977	.186	(149-802)	
6. Joe Torre, St. L. 1971	.185	(137-739)	
7. Mike Schmidt, Phila. 1981	.185	(91-491)	
8. Hank Aaron, Atl. 1971	.184	(118-643)	
9. Billy Williams, Chi. 1972	.178	(122-685)	
10. Willie Montanez, Phila. 1971	.177	(99-558)	

WIN PERCENTAGE

AL			
1. Gaylord Perry, Cleve. 1972	.333	(24-72)	
2. Nolan Ryan, Cal. 1974	.324	(22-68)	
3. Wilbur Wood, Chi. 1973	.312	(24-77)	
4. Ferguson Jenkins, Tex. 1974	.298	(25-84)	
5. Dave Stieb, Tor. 1981	.297	(11-37)	
6. Steve Busby, KC 1974	.286	(22-77)	
7. Wilbur Wood, Chi. 1971	.278	(22-79)	
8. Catfish Hunter, Oak. 1974	.278	(25-90)	
9. Catfish Hunter, NY 1975	.277	(23-83)	
10. Wilbur Wood, Chi. 1972	.276	(24-87)	

NL			
1. Steve Carlton, Phila. 1972	.458	(27-59)	
2. Phil Niekro, Atl. 1979	.318	(21-66)	
3. Randy Jones, SD 1976	.301	(22-73)	
4. Ferguson Jenkins, Chi. 1971	.289	(24-83)	
5. Randy Jones, SD 1975	.282	(20-71)	
6. Phil Niekro, Atl. 1978	.275	(19-69)	
7. Ron Bryant, SF 1973	.273	(24-88)	
8. Tom Seaver, NY 1975	.268	(22-82)	
9. Steve Carlton, Phila. 1980	.264	(24-91)	
10. Ross Grimsley, Mont. 1978	.263	(20-76)	

Compiled by David Brown

BIRDS ARE BEST

Since divisional play was adopted in 1969, Baltimore has been the biggest winner.

American League	W	L	Pct.	GB
Baltimore	1212	817	.597	—
New York	1134	903	.557	82
Boston	1124	915	.552	93
Oakland	1073	970	.525	146
Kansas City	1067	971	.524	149 1/2
Minnesota	1027	1011	.504	189 1/2
Detroit	1023	1019	.501	195 1/2
Wash.-Texas	966	1069	.475	249
California	968	1076	.474	251 1/2
Seattle-Milw.	950	1094	.465	269 1/2
Chicago	944	1089	.464	270
Cleveland	930	1097	.459	281
Seattle*	290	465	.384	285
Toronto*	270	482	.359	303 1/2
National League				
Cincinnati	1197	845	.586	—
Los Angeles	1150	896	.562	49
Pittsburgh	1133	904	.556	61 1/2
Houston	1028	1017	.503	170 1/2
Philadelphia	1025	1019	.501	173
St. Louis	1020	1019	.500	175 1/2
San Francisco	1015	1031	.496	184
Chicago	979	1060	.480	216 1/2
New York	971	1069	.476	225
Atlanta	949	1088	.466	245 1/2
Montreal	950	1092	.465	247
San Diego	833	1210	.408	364 1/2

* Entered majors in 1977
Compiled by David Brown

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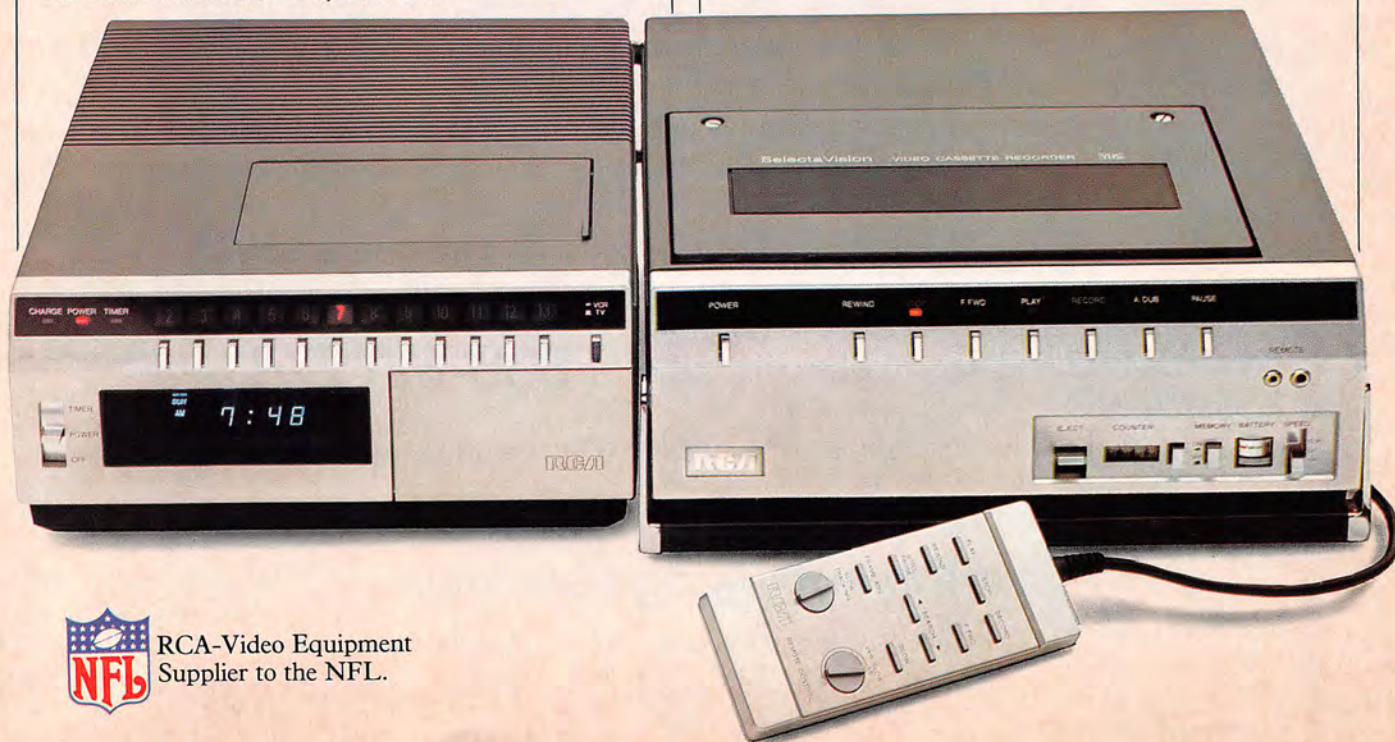
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The Good Doctor

I heard a football announcer say recently that a player had "coughed up the ball." You hear so much of this lately. Why do football players swallow the ball in the first place? Have any been seriously injured as a result?

H. S., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

It usually happens when a quarterback tries to pass but can't find a receiver and has to eat the ball. Then, in order for the game to continue, he must cough it up. The ref pounds him on the back to help him disgorge the pigskin. The procedure is very painful and can cause a quarterback to suffer premature loss of his audibles.

A hockey player takes a hard shot at the puck, which flies into the mouth of a defensive player. The force of the shot then flings the defensive player backward and his head, with the puck lodged in his throat, goes past the goalie into the net. What's the ruling?

C. J., Ottawa, Canada

The defensive player must cough up the puck.

Some baseball teams have an Oldtimers Day each year when they bring back the old players. I really love to see 'em and I wonder why they don't do this in other sports. Boxing, for instance. It would be great to see, say, Tony Zale and Rocky Graziano go at it again, if only for a few rounds. If they can do it in baseball, why not the ring?

L. M., Providence, Rhode Island

You haven't been paying attention. All-time greats Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier both held Oldtimers Day bouts recently.

What's this I hear about taxi squads in the NFL? I've been driving a taxi for years in an NFL city. Could you tell me the salary range and how to apply for a position?

M. W., Minneapolis, Minnesota

Members of NFL taxi squads must be able to drive while wearing helmets and shoulder pads. Also, they must stop upon hearing a whistle, avoid offensive maneuvers and illegal procedures and be able to work on week-ends.

I took my wife of three months to a wrestling match and it was lots of fun till the third bout, when a 300-pound behemoth picked up his opponent, spun him round about eight times and hurled him out of the ring. He landed in my wife's lap, introduced himself and they left the arena together. I haven't heard from her since. Can I sue?

R. W., Detroit, Michigan

I'm afraid not.

Where did Dave Winfield ever learn to spring up and make those homer-robbing catches way over the wall?

F. T., Bronx, New York

Spring training.

Do the ends justify the means?

B. K., Schenectady, New York

Sure. If they catch enough passes, they're worth their weight in gold.

This summer I was listening to a baseball broadcast when the announcer said, "The batter hit a screamer." Who are these screamers and why do they allow players to assault them?

P. D., Wheatfield, Indiana

In the last couple of seasons a particularly neurotic breed of fan has been showing up in certain ballparks around the country. Around the fourth inning these fans begin to keen and wail in a high-pitched tone that is extraordinarily annoying. Some experts theorize that the screamers are oldtimers bemoaning the loss of old

values in a rapidly changing sports climate.

I've just taken over as coach of a women's basketball team. Though I've been playing and coaching sports for 20 years, I've never worked with women before. Are there any differences I should be aware of? Any tips?

J. O., Intercourse, Pennsylvania

Avoid man-to-man defenses.

Since lefties are always called southpaws, how come righties are never called northpaws?

E. T., Lansing, Michigan

Righties don't need funny nicknames because they're normal. Lefties are weirdos, so we make fun of them and call them names and laugh at their expense. This is just one of the obscure prejudices that life is full of and no one understands why and if you don't like it, too bad.

What was the most embarrassing injury of the NFL season?

A. V., Salt Lake City, Utah

Bob Pratt, a guard for the Baltimore Colts, strained a hamstring before a game against the New York Jets when he ran out for the coin toss.

Why isn't there more Greco-Roman wrestling on TV?

E. E., Hartford, Connecticut

There are so few Greco-Romans around anymore, it's hard to find a good match. ■

Are you among the sportsloren? Don't be ashamed. Help is now available. The Good Doctor knows all, tells some. Send your problems, questions and gripes to The Good Doctor, Inside Sports, 444 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The Fan

BY STEVEN D. BROWN

Singing the Blues Of Utah and All That Jazz

It is seven years now since the afternoon I sat in my New Orleans office and invented the jazz.

Or rather: The Jazz. By day I was the model of the industrious stockbroker, but by night I was a basketball fanatic, frenzied by the thought of the NBA arriving in Louisiana. It was 1974, and Sam Battistone and company had been awarded a franchise for New Orleans. One of the first orders of business was naming the team, and management had offered season tickets and a trip to the All-Star Game for the winning entry. I spent most of my waking hours thinking through the possibilities—what name would describe New Orleans at its best and yet be descriptive of my beloved sport as well?

The New Orleans Gumbo. The New Orleans Pirogues. The New Orleans Shrimp. The New Orleans Hurricanes. The New Orleans Bayou Blasters. The New Orleans Oysters. The Louisiana Pearls. The Louisiana Lagniappes. The Crescent City Cajuns. They all related to the New Orleans area, but what was their connection to basketball? What described the rhythms of life in New Orleans as well as the balletic action on a basketball floor? Then it came to me—the New Orleans Jazz.

Jazz—the music that Jelly Roll Morton invented in New Orleans. Jazz—how better to describe the Nureyev-like movements of a Julius Erving? And

what better way to describe one of Pete Maravich's behind-the-back, between-the-legs alley-oop passes—Jazz! I rushed to the post office.

Then the news came. I had won. New Orleans had a new basketball team and its name was mine. The Jazz.

There was the initial kidding about whether the name was plural or singu-

lary. Truck Robinson always wanted to go someplace else. Pistol Pete tore up his knee, VBK was fired and instead of making Elgin Baylor suit up, they made him the coach. Attendance dwindled, but I remained strong. After all, they were using my name.

The headline in the *Times-Picayune* said it all: "The Jazz move to Salt

Lake City." I became despondent. New Orleans was losing its only major league sports franchise—I don't recognize the Saints as a major league team—and there was nothing the city or its people could do about it. At least they were going to keep my name, no matter how ill-fitting. I'm sure that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir enjoys a good time as well as the rest of us, but naming a team the Utah Jazz is like naming a team from Miami the Zeppelins. I had a good laugh with the rest of the fans left behind in New Orleans—they were probably laughing in Utah, too—but I did receive some pleasure knowing my name would



lar—had the Jazzes won or had the Jazz won? But the fans turned out in large numbers at the Superdome, and I would like to think they grew to love the name as they grew to love the team. The Jazz (Jazz's?) home games became happenings. The fans were as boisterous as any in the league—Bourbon Street syndrome—and were rewarded mainly by Pete Maravich's heroics and Butch van Breda Kolff's histrionics. That was entertainment.

And Jazz management responded with mismanagement. Would you trade a couple of No. 1 draft picks for a 32-year-old Gail Goodrich? The years went on, the team kept losing (35-47, 39-43, 26-56) and the player drafts got worse. Neal Walk became the NBA's first vegetarian center, Rich Kelley always tried harder and

survive.

I went back to brokering, this time in Dallas. Cutting 40 or so NBA games out of my schedule was no easy task for a basketball addict, but my rehabilitation was progressing nicely. I even went to two Maverick games and was able to maintain control. Then I read *INSIDE SPORTS'* account of Bernard King's struggle back from alcoholism. When I got to the part about his mistreatment by Jazz management, I relapsed. My name had been disgraced for the last time.

I can't stand it any more. Give me back my name! ■

STEVEN D. BROWN, who was general manager of the New Orleans Pride in the WBL for a year, is now a commodities broker in Newport Beach, California.

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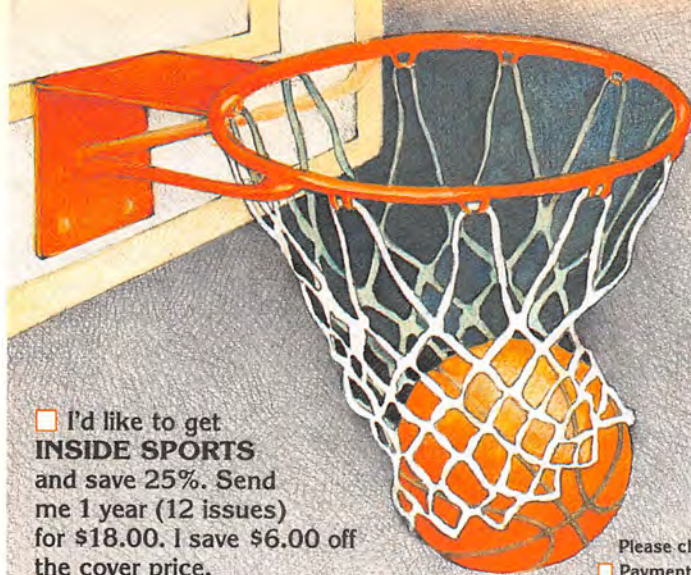
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